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GIL BLAS

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ALAIN RENÉ LE SAGE

THE ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS

OF SANTILLANE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY TOBIAS SMOLLETT

PRECEDED BY

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICE OF LE SAGE

BY GEORGE SAINTSBURY

With Twelve Original Etchings by R. de Los Rios

IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. II.

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HISTORY OF GIL BLAS

OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK THE FOURTH. — (CONTINUED).

CHAPTER VII.

GIL BLAS LEAVES HIS PLACE AND GOES INTO THE SERVICE OF DON GONZALES PACHECO.

THREE weeks after marriage, my mistress bethought herself of rewarding the services I had rendered her. She made me a present of a hundred pistoles, telling me at the same time: Gil Blas, my good fellow, it is not that I mean to turn you away, for you have my free leave to stay here as long as you please; but my husband has an uncle, Don Gonzales Pacheco, who wants you very much for a valet-de-chambre. I have given you so excellent a character, that he would let me have no peace till I consented to part with you. He is a very worthy old nobleman, so that you will be quite in your element in his family.

I thanked Aurora for all her kindness, and, as my occupation was over about her, I so much the more readily accepted the post that offered, as it was

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merely a transfer from one branch of the Pachecos to another. One morning, therefore, I called on the illustrious Don Gonzales with a message from the bride. He ought at least to have overslept himself, for he was in bed at near noon. When I went into his chamber, a page had just brought him a basin of soup, which he was taking. The dotard cherished his whiskers, or rather tortured them with curling-papers; though his eyes were sunk in their sockets, his complexion pale, and his visage emaciated. This was one of those old codgers who have been a little whimsical or so in their youth, and have made poor amends for their freedoms by the discretion of their riper age. His reception of me was affable enough, with an assurance that if my attachment to him kept pace with my fidelity to his niece, my condition should not be worse than that of my fellows. I promised to place him in my late mistress's shoes, and became the working partner in a new firm.

A new firm it undoubtedly was, and heaven knows we had a strange head of the house. The resurrection of Lazarus was an ordinary event compared to his getting up. Imagine to yourself a long bag of dry bones, a mere skeleton, a dissection, an anatomy of a man; a study in osteology! As for the legs, three or four pair of stockings, one over the other, had no room to make any figure upon them. In addition to the foregoing, this mummy before death was asthmatic, and therefore obliged to divide the little breath he had between his cough and his

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loquacity. He breakfasted on chocolate. On the strength of that refreshment, he ventured to call for pen, ink, and paper, and to write a short note, which he sealed and sent to its address by the page who had administered the broth. But this henceforth will be your office, my good lad, said he, as he turned his haggard eyes upon me; all my little concerns will be in your hands, and especially those in which Donna Euphrasia takes an interest. That lady is an enchanting young creature, with whom I am distractedly in love, and by whom, though I say it who should not say it, I am met with all the mutual ardor of inextinguishable and unutterable passion.

Heaven defend us! thought I within myself: good now! if this old antidote to rapture can fancy himself an object on which the fair should waste their sweets, is it any wonder that among our young folks each fancies himself the Adonis, for whom every Venus pines? Gil Blas, pursued he with a chuckle, this very day will I take you to this abode of pleasure: it is my house of call almost every evening for a bit of supper. You will be quite petrified at her modest appearance, and the rigid propriety of her behavior. Far from taking after those little wanton vagrants, who are hey-go mad after striplings, and give themselves up to the fascinations of exterior appearance, she has a proper insight into things, staid, ripe, and judicious: what she wants is the *bonâ fide* spirit and discretion of a man; a lover who has served an apprenticeship to his trade, in prefer-

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ence to all the flashy fellows of the modern school. This is but an epitome of the panegyric, which the noble duke Don Gonzales pronounced upon his mistress. He burdened himself with the task of proving her a compendium of all human perfection; but the lecture was little calculated for the conviction of the hearer. I had attended an experimental course among the actresses; and had always found that the elderly candidates had been plucked in their amours. Yet, as a matter of courtesy, it was impossible not to put on the semblance of giving implicit credit to my master's veracity; I even added chivalry to courtesy, and threw down my glove on Euphrasia's penetration and the correctness of her taste. My impudence went the length of asserting, that it was impossible for her to have selected a better-provided crony. The grown-up simpleton was not aware, that I was fumigating his nostrils at the expense of his addled brain; on the contrary, he bristled at my praises: so true is it, that a flatterer may play what game he likes against the pigeons of high life! They let you look over their hand, and then wonder that you beat them.

The old crawler, having scribbled through his billet-doux, restrained the luxuriance of a straggling hair or two with his tweezers; then bathed his eyes in the nostrum of some perfumer to give them a brilliancy which their natural gum would have eclipsed. His ears were to be picked and washed, and his hands to be cleansed from the effects of his other ablutions; and the labors of the toilet were

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to be closed, by pencilling every remaining hair in the disforested domain of his whiskers, pericranium, and eyebrows. No old dowager, with a purse to buy a second husband, ever took more pains to assure herself by the cultivation of her charms, that the person, and not the fortune, should be the object of attraction. The assassin stab of time was parried by the quart and tierce of art. Just as he had done making himself up, in came another old fogram of his acquaintance, by name the Count of Asumar. This genius made no secret of his gray locks; leaned upon a stick, and seemed to plume himself on his venerable age, instead of wishing to appear in the heydey of his prime. Signor Pacheco, said he as he came in, I am come to take pot-luck with you today. You are always welcome, count, rejoined my master. No sooner said than done! they embraced with a thousand grimaces, took their seats opposite to one another, and began chatting till dinner was served.

Their conversation turned at first upon a bull-feast which had taken place a few days before. They talked about the cavaliers, and who among them had displayed most dexterity and vigor; whereupon the old count, like another Nestor, whom present events furnish with a topic of expatiating on the past, said, with a deep-drawn sigh: Alas! where will you meet with men, nowadays, fit to hold a candle to my contemporaries? The public diversions are a mere bauble, to what they were when I was a young man. I could not help chuckling in my sleeve at my good

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lord of Asumar's whim; for he did not stop at the handiwork of human invention. Would you believe it? At table, when the fruit was brought in, at the sight of some very fine peaches, this ungrateful consumer of the earth's produce exclaimed: In my time, the peaches were of a much larger size than they are now; but nature sinks lower and lower from day to day. If that is the case, said Don Gonzales with a sneer, Adam's hot-house fruit must have been of a most unwieldy circumference.

The count of Asumar staid till quite evening with my master, who had no sooner got rid of him, than he sallied forth with me in his train. We went to Euphrasia's, who lived within a stone's throw of our house, and found her lodged in a style of the first elegance. She was tastefully dressed, and for the youthfulness of her air might have been taken to be in her teens, though thirty bonny summers at least had poured their harvests in her lap. She had often been reckoned pretty, and her wit was exquisite. Neither was she one of your brazen-faced jilts, with nothing but flimsy balderdash in their talk, and a libertine forwardness in their manners: here was modesty of carriage as well as propriety of discourse; and she threw out her little sallies in the most exquisite manner, without seeming to aspire beyond natural good sense. O heaven! said I, is it possible that a creature of so virtuous a stamp by nature should have abandoned herself to vicious courses for a livelihood? I had taken it for granted, that all women of light character carried the mark

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of the beast upon their foreheads. It was a surprise therefore to see such apparent rectitude of conduct; neither did it occur to me that these hacks for all customers could go at any pace, and assume the polish of well-bred society, to impose upon their cullies of the higher ranks. What if a lively petulance should be the order of the day? they are lively and petulant. Should modesty take its turn in the round of fashion, nothing can exceed their outward show of prudent and delicate reserve. They play the comedy of love in many masks; and are the prude, the coquette, or the virago, as they fall in with the quiz, the coxcomb, or the bully.

Don Gonzales was a gentleman and a man of taste; he could not stomach those beauties who call a spade, a spade. Such were not for his market; the rites of Venus must be consummated in the temple of Vesta. Euphrasia had got up her part accordingly, and proved by her performance that there is no comedy like that of real life. I left my master, like another Numa with his Egeria, and went down into a hall, where whom should fortune throw in my way but an old abigail, whom I had formerly known as maid-of-all-work to an actress? The recognition was mutual. So! well met once more, Signor Gil Blas, said she. Then you have turned off Arsenia, just as I have parted with Constance. Yes, truly, answered I, it is a long while ago since I went away, and exchanged her service for that of a very different lady. Neither the theatre nor the people about it are to my taste. I gave myself my own discharge, with-

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out condescending to the slightest explanation with Arsenia. You were perfectly in the right, replied the new-found abigail, called Beatrice. That was pretty much my method of proceeding with Constance. One morning early, I gave in my accounts with a very sulky air; she took them from me in moody silence, and we parted in a sort of well-bred dudgeon.

I am quite delighted, said I, that we have met again, where we need not be ashamed of our employers. Donna Euphrasia looks for all the world like a woman of fashion, and I am much deceived if she has not reputation too. You are too clear-sighted to be deceived, answered the old appendage to sin. She is of a good family; and as for her temper, I can assure you it is unparalleled for evenness and sweetness. None of your termagant mistresses, never to be pleased, but always grumbling and scolding about everything, making the house ring with their clack, and fretting poor servants to a thread, whose places, in short, are a hell upon earth! I have not in all this time heard her raise her voice on any occasion whatever. When things happen not to be done exactly in her way, she sets them to rights without any anger, nor does any of that bad language escape her lips, of which some high-spirited ladies are so liberal. My master, too, rejoined I, is very mild in his disposition; the very milk of human kindness; and in this respect we are, between ourselves, much better off than when we lived among the actresses. A thousand times bet-

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ter, replied Beatrice; my life used to be all bustle and distraction; but this place is an actual hermitage. Not a creature darkens our doors but this excellent Don Gonzales. You will be my only helpmate in my solitude, and my lot is but too greatly blessed. For this long time have I cherished an affection for you: and many a time and oft have I begrudged that Laura the felicity of engrossing you for her sweetheart; but in the end I hope to be even with her. If I cannot boast of youth and beauty like hers, to balance the account, I detest coquetry, and have all the constancy as well as affection of a turtle-dove.

As honest Beatrice was one of those ladies who are obliged to hawk their wares, and cheapen themselves for want of cheapeners in the market, I was happily shielded from any temptation to break the commandments. Nevertheless, it might not have been prudent to let her see in what contempt her charms were held: for which reason I forced my natural politeness so far, as to talk to her in a style not to cut off all hope of my more serious advances. I flattered myself then, that I had found favor in the eyes of an old dresser to the stage: but pride was destined to have a fall, even on so humble an occasion. The domestic trickster did not sharpen her allurements from any longing for my pretty person; her design in subduing me to the little soft god was to enlist me for the purposes of her mistress, to whom she had sworn so passive an obedience, that she would have sold her eternal self to the old chapman, who first set up the trade of sin, rather than

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have disappointed her slightest wishes. My vain conceit was sufficiently evident on the very next morning, when I carried an Ovidian letter from my master to Euphrasia. The lady gave me an affable reception, and made a thousand pretty speeches, echoed from the practised lips of her chambermaid. The expression of my countenance was peculiarly interesting to the one: but that within which passeth show was the flattering theme of the other. According to their account, the fortunate Don Gonzales had picked up a treasure. In short, my praises ran so high, that I began to think worse of myself than I had ever done in the whole course of my life. Their motive was sufficiently obvious; but I was determined to play at diamond cut diamond. The simper of a simpleton is no bad countermine to the attack of a sharper. These ladies under favor were of the latter description, and they soon began to open their batteries.

Hark you, Gil Blas! said Euphrasia; fortune declares in your favor if you do not balk her. Let us put our heads together, my good friend. Don Gonzales is old, and a good deal shaken in constitution; so that a very little fever, in the hands of a very great doctor, would carry him to a better place. Let us take time by the forelock, and ply our arts so busily as to secure to me the largest slice of his effects. If I prosper, you shall not starve, I promise you; and my bare word is a better security than all the deeds and conveyances of all the lawyers in Madrid. Madam, answered I, you have but to

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command me. Give me my commission on your muster-roll, and you shall have no reason to complain either of my cowardice or contumacy. So be it then, replied she. You must watch your master, and bring me an account of all his comings and goings. When you are chatting together in his more familiar moments, never fail to lead the conversation on the subject of our sex; and then by an artful, but seemingly natural transition, take occasion to say all the good you can invent of me. Ring Euphrasia in his ears till all the house reëchoes. I would counsel you besides to keep a wary eye on all that passes in the Pacheco family. If you catch any relation of Don Gonzales sneaking about him, with a design on the inheritance, bring me word instantly: that is all you have to do, and trust me for sinking, burning, and destroying him in less than no time. I have ferreted out the weak side of all your master's relations long ago; they are each of them to be made ridiculous in some shape or other; so that the nephews and cousins, after sitting to me for their portraits, are already turned with their faces to the wall.

It was evident by these instructions, with many more to the same time and tune, that Euphrasia was one of those ladies whose partialities all lean to the side of elderly inamoratos, with more money than wit. Not long before, Don Gonzales, who could refuse nothing to the tender passion, had sold an estate; and she pocketed the cash. Not a day passed but she got some little personal remem-

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brance out of him; and besides all this, a corner of his will was the ultimate object of her speculation. I affected to engage hand over head in their infamous plot; and if I must confess all without mental reservation, it was almost a moot point, on my return home, on which side of the cause I should take a brief. There was on either a profitable alternative; whether to join in fleecing my master, or to merit his gratitude by rescuing him from the plunderers. Conscience, however, seemed to have some little concern in the determination; it was quite ridiculous to choose the by-path of villany, when there was a better toll to be taken on the highway of honesty. Besides, Euphrasia had dealt too much in generals; an arithmetical definition of so much for so much has more meaning in it than "all the wealth of the Indies;" and to this shrewd reflection, perhaps, was owing my uncorrupted probity. Thus did I resolve to signalize my zeal in the service of Don Gonzales, in the persuasion that if I was lucky enough to disgust the worshipper by befouling his idol, it would turn to very good account. On a statement of debtor and creditor between the right and the wrong side of the action, the money balance was visibly in favor of virtue, not to mention the delights of a fair and irreproachable character.

If vice so often assumes the semblance of its contrary, why should not hypocrisy now and then change sides for variety? I held myself up to Euphrasia for a thorough swindler. She was dupe enough to believe that I was incessantly talking of

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her to my master; and thereupon I wove a tissue of frippery and falsehood, which imposed on her for sterling truth. She had so completely given herself up to my insinuations, as to believe me her convert, her disciple, her confederate. The better still to carry on this fraud upon fraud, I affected to languish for Beatrice: and she, in ecstasy at her age to see a young fellow at her skirts, did not much trouble herself about my sincerity, if I did but play my part with vigor and address. When we were in the presence of our princesses, my master in the parlor and myself in the kitchen, the effect was that of two different pictures, but of the same school. Don Gonzales, dry as touchwood, with all its inflammability, and nothing but its smother, seemed a fitter subject for extreme unction than for amorous parley; while my little pet, in proportion to the violence of my flame, niggled, nudged, toyed, and romped, like a school-girl in vacation; and no wonder she knew her lesson so pat, for the old coquette had been upwards of forty years in the form. She had finished her studies under certain professors of gallantry, whose art of pleasing becomes the more critical by practice; till they die under the accumulated experience of two or three generations.

It was not enough for me to go every evening with my master to Euphrasia's: it was sometimes my lounge even in daytime. But let me pop my head in at what hour I would, that forbidden creature man was never there, nor even a woman of any description, that might not be just as easily expressed

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as understood. There was not the least loop-hole for a paramour! — a circumstance not a little perplexing to one who could not readily believe, that so pretty a bale of goods could submit to a strict monopoly, by such a dealer as Don Gonzales. This opinion undoubtedly was formed on a near acquaintance with female nature, as will be apparent in the sequel; for the fair Euphrasia, while waiting for my master's translation, fortified herself with patience in the arms of a lover, with some little fellow-feeling for the frailties of her age.

One morning I was carrying, according to custom, a note to this peerless pattern of perfection. There certainly were, or I was not standing in the room, the feet of a man ensconced behind the tapestry. Out slunk I, just as if I had no eyes in my head; yet, though such a discovery was nothing but what might have been expected, neither was the piper to be paid out of my pocket; my feelings were a good deal staggered at the breach of faith. Ah, traitress! exclaimed I, with virtuous indignation, abandoned Euphrasia! Not satisfied to humbug a silly old gentleman with a tale of love, you share his property in your person with another, and add profligacy to dissimulation! But to be sure, on afterthoughts, I was but a greenhorn when I took on so for such a trivial occurrence! It was rather a subject for mirth than for moral reflection, and perfectly justified by the way of the world; the languid, embargoed commerce of my master's amorous moments had need be filliped by a trade in some more

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merchantable wares. At all events it would have been better to have held my tongue, than to have laid hold on such an opportunity of playing the faithful servant. But instead of tempering my zeal with discretion, nothing would serve the turn but taking up the wrongs of Don Gonzales in the spirit of chivalry. On this high principle, I made a circumstantial report of what I had seen, with the addition of the attempt made by Euphrasia to seduce me from my good faith. I gave it in her own words without the least reserve, and put him in the way of knowing all that was to be known of his mistress. He was struck all in a heap by my intelligence, and a faint flash of indignation on his faded cheek seemed to give security that the lady's infidelity would not go unpunished. Enough, Gil Blas, said he; I am infinitely obliged by your attachment to my service, and your probity is very acceptable to me. I will go to Euphrasia this very moment. I will overwhelm her with reproaches, and break at once with the ungrateful creature. With these words, he actually bent his way to the subject of his anger, and dispensed with my attendance, from the kind motive of sparing me the awkwardness which my presence during their explanation would have occasioned to my feelings.

I longed for my master's return with all the impatience of an interested person. There could not be a doubt but that with his strong grounds of complaint, he would return completely disentangled from the snares of his nymph. In this thought I

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extolled and magnified myself for my good deed. What could be more flattering than the thanks of the kindred who were naturally to inherit after Don Gonzales, when they should be informed that their relative was no longer the puppet of a figure-dance so hostile to their interests? It was not to be supposed but that such a friend would be remembered, and that my merits would at last be distinguished from those of other serving-men, who are usually more disposed to encourage their masters in licentiousness, than to draw them off to habits of decency. I was always of an aspiring temper, and thought to have passed for the Joseph or the Scipio of the servants' hall; but so fascinating an idea was only to be indulged for an hour or two. The founder of my fortunes came home. My friend, said he, I have had a very sharp brush with Euphrasia. She insists on it that you have trumped up a cock-and-bull story. If their word is to be taken, you are no better than an impostor, a hireling in the pay of my nephews, for whose sake you have set all your wits at work to bring about a quarrel between her and me. I have seen the real tears, made of water, run down in floods from her poor dear eyes. She has vowed to me as solemnly as if I had been her confessor, that she never made any overtures to you in her life, and that she does not know what man is. Beatrice, who seems a simple, innocent sort of girl, is exactly in the same story, so that I could not but believe them and be pacified, whether I would or no.

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How then, sir? interrupted I, in accents of undissembled sorrow, do you question my sincerity? Do you distrust . . . . No, my good lad, interrupted he again in his turn; I will do you ample justice. I do not suspect you of being in league with my nephews. I am satisfied that all you have done has been for my good, and own myself much obliged to you for it; but appearances are apt to mislead, so that perhaps you did not see in reality what you took it into your head that you saw; and in that case, only consider yourself how offensive your charge must be to Euphrasia. Yet, let that be as it will, she is a creature whom I cannot help loving in spite of my senses; so that the sacrifice she demands must be made, and that sacrifice is no less than your dismission. I lament it very much, my poor dear Gil Blas, and if that will be any satisfaction to you, my consent was wrung from me most unwillingly; but there was no saying nay. With one thing, however, you may comfort yourself, you shall not be sent away with empty pockets. Nay, more, I mean to turn you over to a lady of my acquaintance, where you will live to your liking.

I was not a little mortified to find all my noble acts and motives end in my own confusion. I gave a left-handed blessing to Euphrasia, and wept over the weakness of Don Gonzales, to be so foolishly infatuated by her. The kind-hearted old gentleman felt within himself that in turning me adrift at the peremptory demand of his mistress, he was not performing the most manly action of his life. For this

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reason, as a set-off against his hen-pecked cowardice, and that I might the more easily swallow this bitter dose, he gave me fifty ducats, and took me with him next morning to the Marchioness of Chaves, telling that lady before my face, that I was a young man of unexceptionably good character, and very high in his good graces, but that as certain family reasons prevented him from continuing me on his own establishment, he should esteem it as a favor if she would take me on hers. After such an introduction, I was retained at once as her appendage, and found myself, I scarcely knew how, established in another household.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARCHIONESS OF CHAVES: HER CHARACTER, AND THAT OF HER COMPANY.

THE Marchioness of Chaves was a widow of five and thirty, tall, handsome, and well-proportioned. She enjoyed an income of ten thousand ducats, without the encumbrance of a nursery. I never met with a lady of fewer words, nor one of a more solemn aspect. Yet this exterior did not prevent her from being set up as the cleverest woman in all Madrid. Her great assemblies, attended by people of the first quality, and by men of letters who made a coffee-house of her apartments, contributed perhaps

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more than anything she said to give her the reputation she had acquired. But this is a point on which it is not my province to decide. I have only to relate as her historian, that her name carried with it the idea of superior genius, and that her house was called, to distinguish it from the ordinary societies in town, The Fashionable Institution for Literature, Taste, and Science.

In point of fact, not a day passed, but there were readings there, sometimes of dramatic pieces, and sometimes in other branches of poetry. But the subjects were always selected from the graver muses; wit and humor were held in the most sovereign contempt. Comedy, however spirited; a novel, however pointed in its satire or ingenious in its fable, such light productions as these were treated as weak efforts of the brain, without the slightest claim to patronage; whereas, on the contrary, the most microscopical work in the serious style, whether ode, pastoral, or sonnet, was trumpeted to the skies as the most illustrious effort of a learned and poetical age. It not unfrequently fell out, that the public reversed the decrees of this chancery for genius: nay, they had sometimes the gross ill-breeding to hiss the very pieces which had been sanctioned by this court of criticism.

I was chief manager of the establishment, and my office consisted in getting the drawing-room ready to receive the company, in setting the chairs in order for the gentlemen, and the sofas for the ladies; after which, I took my station on the landing-place to

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bawl out the names of the visitors as they came up stairs, and usher them into the circle. The first day, an old piece of family furniture, who was stationed by my side in the ante-chamber, gave me their description with some humor, after I had shown them into the room. His name was Andrew Molina. He had a good deal of mother's wit, with a flowing vein of satire, much gravity of sarcasm, and a happy knack at hitting off characters. The first comer was a bishop. I roared out his lordship's name, and as soon as he was gone in, my nomenclator told me — That prelate is a very curious gentleman. He has some little influence at court, but wants to persuade the world that he has a great deal. He presses his service on every soul he comes near, and then leaves them completely in the lurch. One day he met with a gentleman in the presence chamber who bowed to him. He laid hold of him, and squeezing his hand, assured him, with an inundation of civilities, that he was altogether devoted to his lordship. For goodness sake, do not spare me; I shall not die in my bed without having first found an opportunity of making you my debtor. The gentleman returned his thanks with all becoming expressions of gratitude, and when they were at some distance from one another, the obsequious churchman said to one of his attendants in waiting, I ought to know that man; I have some floating, indistinct idea of having seen him somewhere.

Next after the bishop, came the son of a grandee. When I had introduced him into my lady's room,

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This nobleman, said Molina, is also an original in his way. You are to take notice that he often pays a visit, for the express purpose of talking over some urgent business with the friend on whom he calls, and goes away again without once thinking on the topic he came solely to discuss. But, added my showman on the sight of two ladies, here are Donna Angela de Penafiel and Donna Margaretta de Montalvan. This pair have not a feature of resemblance to each other. Donna Margaretta prides herself on her philosophical acquirements; she will hold her head as high as the most learned head among the doctors of Salamanca, nor will the wisdom of her conceit ever give up the point to the best reasons they can render. As for Donna Angela, she does not affect the learned lady though she has taken no unsuccessful pains in the improvement of her mind. Her manner of talking is rational and proper, her ideas are novel and ingenious, expressed in polite, significant, and natural terms. This latter portrait is delightful, said I to Molina; but the other, in my opinion, is scarcely to be tolerated in the softer sex. Not over bearable indeed! replied he with a sneer: even in men it does but expose them to the lash of satire. The good marchioness herself, our honored lady, continued he, she too has a sort of a philosophical looseness. There will be fine chopping of logic there to-day! God grant the mysteries of religion may not be invaded by these disputants.

As he was finishing this last sentence, in came a

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withered bit of mortality, with a grave and crabbed look. My companion showed him no mercy. This fellow, said he, is one of those pompous, unbending spirits, who think to pass for men of profound genius, under favor of a few commonplaces extracted out of Seneca; yet they are but shallow coxcombs when one comes to examine them narrowly. Then followed in the train a spruce figure, with tolerable person and address, to say nothing of a troubled air and manner, which always supposes a plentiful stock of self-sufficiency. I inquired who this was. A dramatic poet! said Molina. He has manufactured a hundred thousand verses in his time, which never brought him in the value of a groat; but as a set-off against his metrical failure, he has feathered his nest very warmly by six lines of humble prose: you will wonder by what magic touch a fortune could be made . . .

And so I did; but a confounded noise upon the staircase put verse and prose completely out of my head. Good again! exclaimed my informer; here is the licentiate Campanario. He is his own harbinger before ever he makes his appearance. He sets out from the very street door in a continued volley of conversation, and you hear how the alarm is kept up till he makes his retreat. In good sooth, the vaulted roof reëchoed with the organ of the thundering licentiate, who at length exhibited the case in which the pipes were contained. He brought a bachelor of his acquaintance by way of accompaniment, and there was not a *sotto voce* passage during

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the whole visit. Signor Campanario, said I to Molina, is to all appearance a man of very fine conversation. Yes, replied my sage instructor, the gentleman has his lucky hits, and a sort of quaintness that might pass for humor; he does very well in a mixed company. But the worst of it is, that incessant talking is one of his most pardonable errors. He is a little too apt to borrow from himself; and as those who are behind the scenes are not to be dazzled by the tinsel of the property-man, so we know how to separate a certain volubility and buffoonery of manner from sterling wit and sense. The greater part of his good things would be thought very bad ones, if submitted, without their concomitant grimaces, to the ordeal of a jest book.

Other groups passed before us, and Molina touched them with his wand. The marchioness, too, came in for a magic rap over the knuckles. Our lady patroness, said he, is better than might be expected for a female philosopher. She is not dainty in her likings; and bating a whim or too, it is no hard matter to give her satisfaction. Wits and women of quality seldom approach so near the atmosphere of good sense; and for passion, she scarcely knows what it is. Play and gallantry are equally in her black books: dear conversation is her first and sole delight. To lead such a life would be little better than penance to the common run of ladies. Molina's character of my mistress established her at once in my good graces. And yet, in the course of a few days, I could not help suspecting

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that, though not dainty in her likings, she knew what passion was, and that a foul copy of gallantry delighted her more than the fairest conversation.

One morning, during the mysteries of the toilet, there presented himself to my notice a little fellow of forty, forbidding in his aspect, more filthy if possible than Pedro de Moya the book-worm, and verging in no marketable measure towards deformity. He told me he wanted to speak with my lady marchioness. On whose business? quoth I. On my own, quoth he, somewhat snappishly. Tell her I am the gentleman; . . . she will understand you; . . . about whom she was talking yesterday with Donna Anna de Velasco. I went before him into my lady's apartment, and gave in his name. The marchioness all at once shrieked out her satisfaction, and ordered me to show him in. It was not courtesy enough to point to a chair, and bid him sit down: but the attendants, forsooth, her own maids about her person, were to withdraw, so that the little hunchback, with better luck than falls to the lot of many a taller man, had the field entirely to himself, as lord paramount. As for the girls and myself, we could not help tittering a little at this uncouthly concerted duet, which lasted nearly an hour: when my patroness dismissed his little lordship, with such a profusion of farewells and God-be-with-you's, as sufficiently evinced her thankfulness for the entertainment she had received.

The conversation had, in fact, been so edifying, that in the afternoon she seized a private opportunity

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of whispering in my ear, Gil Blas, when the short gentleman comes again, you may show him up the back stairs; there is no need of parading him along a line of staring servants. I did as I was ordered. When this epitome of humanity knocked at the door, and that hour was no farther off than the next morning, we threaded all the by-passages to the place of assignation. I played the same modest part two or three times in the very innocence of my soul, without the most distant guess that the material system could form any part of their philosophy. But that hound-like snuff at an ill construction, with which the devil has armed the noses of the most charitable, put me on the scent of a very whimsical game, and I concluded either that the marchioness had an odd taste, or that crookback courted her as proxy to a better man.

Faith and troth, thought I, with all the impertinence of a hasty opinion, if my mistress really likes a handsome fellow behind the curtain, all is well; I forgive her her sins: but if she is stark mad for such a monkey as this, to say the truth, there will be little mercy for her on male or female tongues. But how foully did I defame my honored patroness! The genius of magic had perched herself upon the little conjurer's protuberant shoulder; and his skill having been puffed off to the marchioness, who was just the right food for such jugglers and their tricks, she held private conferences with him. Under his tuition she was to command wealth and treasure, to build castles in the air, to remove from place to place in

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an instant, to reveal future events, to tell what is done in far countries, to call the dead out of their graves, and terrify the world with many miracles. Seriously, and to give him his deserts, the scoundrel lived on the folly of the public; and it has been confidently asserted, that ladies of fashion have not in all ages and countries been exempt from the credulity of their inferiors.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INCIDENT THAT PARTED GIL BLAS AND THE MARCHIONESS OF CHAVES. THE SUBSEQUENT DESTINATION OF THE FORMER.

For six months I lived with the Marchioness of Chaves, and, as it must be admitted, on the fat of the land. But fate, who thrusts footmen as well as heroes into the world, with herself tied about their necks, gave me a jog to be gone, and swore that I should stay no longer in that family or in Madrid. The adventure by which this decree was announced shall be the subject of the ensuing narrative.

In my mistress's female squad there was a nymph named Portia. To say nothing of her youth and beauty, it was her meek demeanor and good repute that captivated me, who had yet to learn that none but the brave deserves the fair. The marchioness's secretary, as proud as a prime minister, and as jealous as the Grand Turk, was caught in the same trap

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as myself. No sooner did he cast an unlucky squint at my advances, than, without waiting to see how Portia might chance to fancy them, he determined pell-mell to have a tilt with me. To forward this ghostly enterprise, he gave me an appointment one morning in a place sadly impervious to all seasonable interruption. Yet as he was a little go-by-the-ground, scarcely up to my shoulders, and apparently of feeble frame, he did not look like a very dangerous antagonist; so away I went with some little courage to the appointed spot. Thinking to come off with flying colors, I anticipated the effect of my bravery on the heart of Portia; but as it turned out, I was gathering my laurels before they had budded. The little secretary, who had been practising for two or three years at the fencing-school, disarmed me like a very baby, and holding the point of his sword up to my throat, Prepare thyself, said he, to balance thine accounts with this world, and open a correspondence with the next, or give me thy rascally word to leave the Marchioness of Chaves this very day, and never more to think of my Portia. I gave him my rascally word, and was honest enough not to think of breaking it. There was an awkwardness in showing my face before the servants of the family, after having been worsted; and especially before the high and mighty princess who had been the theme of our tournament. I only returned home to get together my baggage and wages, and on that very day set off towards Toledo, with a purse pretty well lined, and a knapsack at my back with my wardrobe

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and movables. Though my rascally word was not given to abandon the purlieus of Madrid, I considered it as a matter of delicacy to disappear, at least for a few seasons. My resolution was to make the tour of Spain, and to halt first at one town and then at another. My ready money, thought I, will carry me a good way: I shall not call about me very prodigally. When my stock is exhausted, I can but go into service again. A lad of my versatility will find places in plenty, whenever it may be convenient to look out for them.

It was particularly my wish to see Toledo: and I got thither after three days' journey. My quarters were at a respectable house of entertainment, where I was taken for a gentleman of some figure, under favor of my best clothes, in which I did not fail to bedizen myself. With the pick-tooth carelessness of a lounger, the affectation of a puppy, and the pertness of a wit, it remained with me to dictate the terms of an arrangement with some very pretty women who infested that neighborhood; but, as a hint had been given me that the pocket was the high road to their good graces, my amorous enthusiasm was a little flattered, and, as it was no part of my plan to domesticate myself in any one place, after having seen all the lions at Toledo, I started one morning with the dawn, and took the road to Cuença, intending to go to Arragon. On the second day I went into an inn which stood open to receive me by the road side. Just as I was beginning to recruit the carnal department of my nature, in came a party

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belonging to the Holy Brotherhood. These gentlemen called for wine, and set in for a drinking bout. Over their cups they were conning the description of a young man, whom they had orders to arrest. The spark, said one of them, is not above three and twenty: he has long black hair, is well grown, with an aquiline nose, and rides a bay horse.

I heard their talk without seeming to be a listener; and, in fact, did not trouble my head much about it. They remained in their quarters, and I pursued my journey. Scarcely had I gone a quarter of a mile, before I met a young gentleman on horseback, as personable as need be, and mounted as described by the officers. Faith and troth, thought I within myself, this is the very identical man. Black hair and an aquiline nose! One cannot help doing a good office when it comes in one's way. Sir, said I, give me leave to ask you whether you have not some disagreeable business on your hands? The young man, without returning any answer, looked at me from head to foot, and seemed startled at my question. I assured him it was not wanton curiosity that induced me to address him. He was satisfied of that when I related all I had heard at the inn. My unknown benefactor, said he, I will not deny to you that I have reason to believe myself actually the person of whom the officers are in quest; therefore I shall take another road to avoid them. In my opinion, answered I, it would be better to look out for a spot where you may be in safety, and under shelter from a storm which is brewing, and will soon pour down

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upon our heads. Without loss of time we discovered and made for a row of trees, forming a natural avenue, which led us to the foot of a mountain, where we found a hermitage.

There was a large and deep grotto which time had worn away into the heart of the rock; and the hand of man had added a rude front built of pebbles and shell-work, covered all over with turf. The adjacent grounds were strewed with a thousand sorts of flowers, which scattered their perfume; and one was pleased to see, hard by the grotto, a small fissure in the mountain, whence a spring rippled with a tinkling noise, and poured its pellucid stream along the meadow. At the entrance of this solitary abode stood a venerable hermit, seemingly weighed down with years. He supported himself with one hand upon a staff, and held a rosary of large beads with the other, composed of at least twenty rows. His head was almost lost in a brown woollen cap with long ears; and his beard, whiter than snow, swept down in aged majesty to his waist. We advanced towards him. Father, said I, is it your pleasure to allow us shelter from the threatening storm? Come in, my sons, replied the hermit, after examining me attentively; this hermitage is at your service, to occupy it during pleasure. As for your horse, added he, pointing to the court-yard of his mansion, he will be very well off there. My companion disposed of the animal accordingly, and we followed the old man into the grotto.

No sooner had we got in than a heavy rain fell,

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with a terrific storm of thunder and lightning. The hermit threw himself upon his knees before a consecrated image, fastened to the wall, and we followed the example of our host. Our devotions ceased with the subsiding of the storm; but as the rain continued, though with diminished violence, and night was not far distant, the old man said to us, My sons, you had better not pursue your journey in such weather, unless your affairs are pressing. We answered with one consent, that we had nothing to hinder us from staying there, but the fear of incommoding him; but that if there was room for us in the hermitage, we would thank him for a night's lodging. You may have it without inconvenience, answered the hermit, at least the inconvenience will be all your own. Your accommodation will be rough, and your meal such as a recluse has to offer.

With this cordial welcome to a homely board, the holy personage seated us at a little table, and set before us a few vegetables, a crust of bread, and a pitcher of water. My sons, resumed he, you behold my ordinary fare, but to-day I will make a feast in hospitality towards you. So saying, he fetched a little cheese and some nuts, which he threw down upon the table. The young man, whose appetite was not keen, felt but little tempted by his entertainment. I perceive, said the hermit to him, that you are accustomed to better tables than mine, or rather that sensuality has vitiated your natural relish. I have been in the world like you. The utmost ingenuity of the culinary art, whether to stimulate or

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soothe the palate, was exerted by turns for my gratification. But since I have lived in solitude, my taste has recovered its simplicity. Now, vegetables, fruit, and milk, are my greatest dainties; in a word, I keep an antediluvian table.

While he was haranguing after this fashion, the young man fell into a deep musing. The hermit was aware of his inattention. My son, said he, something weighs upon your spirits. May we not be informed what disturbs you? Open your heart to me. Curiosity is not my motive for questioning you, but charity, and a desire to be of service. I am at a time of life to give advice, and you perhaps are under circumstances to stand in need of it. Yes, father, replied the gentleman with a sigh, I doubtless do stand in need of it, and will follow yours, since you are so good as to offer it; I cannot suppose there is any risk in unbosoming myself to a man like you. No, my son, said the old man, you have nothing to fear, it is under more stately roofs that confidences are betrayed. On this assurance the cavalier began his story.

CHAPTER X.

THE HISTORY OF DON ALPHONSO AND THE FAIR SERAPHINA.

I WILL attempt no disguise from you, my venerable friend, nor from this gentleman who completes my audience. After the generosity of his conduct

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towards me, I should be in the wrong to distrust him. You shall know my misfortunes from their beginning. I am a native of Madrid, and came into the world mysteriously. An officer of the German guard, Baron Steinbach by name, returning home one evening, espied a bundle of fair linen at the foot of his staircase. He took it up and carried it to his wife's apartment, where it turned out to be a new-born infant, wrapped up in very handsome swaddling-clothes, with a note containing an assurance that it belonged to persons of condition, who would come forward and own it at some future period; and the further information that it had been baptized by the name of Alphonso. I was that unfortunate stranger in the world, and this is all that I know about myself. Whether honor or profligacy was the motive of the exposure, the helpless child was equally the victim; whether my unhappy mother wanted to get rid of me, to conceal an habitual course of scandalous amours, or whether she had made a single deviation from the path of virtue with a faithless lover, and had been obliged to protect her fame at the expense of nature and the maternal feelings.

However this might be, the baron and his wife were touched by my destitute condition, and resolved, as they had no children of their own, to bring me up under the name of Don Alphonso. As I grew in years and stature their attachment to me strengthened. My manners, genteel before strangers and affectionate towards them, were the theme of their fondest panegyric. In short, they loved me as

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if I had been their own. Masters of every description were provided for me. My education became their leading object; and far from waiting impatiently till my parents should come forward, they seemed, on the contrary, to wish that my birth might always remain a mystery. As soon as the Baron thought me old enough to bear arms, he sent me into the service. With my ensign's commission, a genteel and suitable equipment was provided for me; and, the more effectually to animate me in the career of glory, my patron pointed out that the path of honor was open to every adventurer, and that the renown of a warrior would be so much the more creditable to me, as I should owe it to none but myself. At the same time he laid open to me the circumstances of my birth, which he had hitherto concealed. As I had passed for his son in Madrid, and had actually thought myself so, it must be owned that this communication gave me some uneasiness. I could not then, nor can I even now, think of it without a sense of shame. In proportion as the innate feelings of a gentleman bear testimony to the birth of one, am I mortified at being rejected and renounced by the unnatural authors of my being.

I went to serve in the Low Countries, but peace was concluded in a short time; and Spain finding herself without assailants, though not without assassins, I returned to Madrid, where I received fresh marks of affection from the Baron and his wife. Rather more than two months after my return, a little page came into my room one morning, and

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presented me with a note couched nearly in the following terms: "I am neither ugly nor crooked, and yet you often see me at my window without the tribute of a glance. This conduct is little in unison with the spirit of your physiognomy, and so far stings me to revenge that I will make you love me if possible."

On the perusal of this epistle, there could be no doubt but it came from a widow, by name Leonora, who lived opposite our house, and had the character of a very great coquette. Hereupon I examined my little messenger, who had a mind to be on the reserve at first, but a ducat in hand opened the floodgates of his intelligence. He even took charge of an answer to his mistress, confessing my guilt, and intimating that its punishment was far advanced.

I was not insensible to a conquest even of this kind. For the rest of the day, home and my window-seat were the grand attraction; and the lady seemed to have fallen in love with her window-seat too. I made signals. She returned them; and on the very next day sent me word by her little Mercury, that if I would be in the street on the following night between eleven and twelve, I might converse with her at a window on the ground floor. Though I did not feel myself very much captivated by so coming on a kind of widow, it was impossible not to send such an answer as if I was; and a sort of amorous curiosity made me as impatient as if I had really been in love. In the dusk of the evening, I went sauntering up and down the Prado till the

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hour of assignation. Before I could get to my appointment, a man mounted on a fine horse alighted near me, and coming up with a peremptory air, Sir, said he, are not you the son of Baron Steinbach? I answered in the affirmative. You are the person then, resumed he, who were to meet Leonora at her window to-night? I have seen her letters and your answers; her page has put them into my hands, and I have followed you this evening from your own house hither, to let you know you have a rival whose pride is not a little wounded at a competition with yourself in an affair of the heart. It would be unnecessary to say more. We are in a retired place; let us therefore draw, unless, to avoid the chastisement in store for you, you will give me your word to break off all connection with Leonora. Sacrifice in my favor all your hopes and interest, or your life must be the forfeit. It had been better, said I, to have insured my generosity by good manners, than to extort my compliance by menaces. I might have granted to your request what I must refuse to this insolent demand.

Well then, resumed he, tying up his horse and preparing for the encounter, let us settle our dispute like men. Little could a person of my condition have stomached the debasement of a request, to a man of your quality. Nine out of ten in my rank would, under such circumstances, have taken their revenge on terms of less honor but more safety. I felt myself exasperated at this last insinuation, so that, seeing he had already drawn his sword, mine

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did not linger in the scabbard. We fell on one another with so much fury, that the engagement did not last long. Whether his attack was made with too much heat, or my skill in fencing was superior, he soon received a mortal wound. He staggered, and dropped dead upon the spot. In such a situation, having no alternative but an immediate escape, I mounted the horse of my antagonist, and went off in the direction of Toledo. There was no venturing to return to Baron Steinbach's, since, besides the danger of the attempt, the narrative of my adventure from my own mouth would only afflict him the more, so that nothing was so eligible as an immediate decampment from Madrid.

Chewing the cud of my own melancholy reflection, I travelled onwards the remainder of the night and all the next morning. But about noon it became necessary to stop, both for the sake of my horse and to avoid the insupportable fierceness of the mid-day heat. I staid in a village till sunset, and then, intending to reach Toledo without drawing bit, went on my way. I had already got two leagues beyond Illescas, when, about midnight, a storm like that of to-day overtook me as I was jogging along the road. There was a garden wall at some little distance, and I rode up to it. For want of any more commodious shelter, my horse's station and my own were arranged, as comfortably as circumstances would admit, near the door of a summer-house at the end of the wall, with a balcony over it. Leaning against the door, I discovered it to be open, owing, as I

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thought, to the negligence of the servants. Having dismounted, less from curiosity than for the sake of a better standing, as the rain had been very troublesome under the balcony, I went into the lower part of the summer-house, leading my horse by the bridle.

My amusement during the storm was in reconnoitring my quarters; and though I had nothing to form an opinion by, but the lurid gleams of the lightning, it was very evident that such a house must belong to some family above the common. I was waiting anxiously till the rain abated, to set forward again on my journey; but a great light at a distance made me change my purpose. Leaving my horse in the summer-house, with the precaution of fastening the door, I made for the light, in the assurance that they were not all gone to bed in the house, and with the intention of requesting a lodging for the night. After crossing several walks, I came to a saloon, and here, too, the door was left open. On my entrance, from the magnificence so handsomely displayed by the light of a fine crystal lustre, it was easy to conclude that this must be the residence of some illustrious nobleman. The pavement was of marble, the wainscot richly carved and gilt, the proportions of architecture tastefully preserved, and the ceiling evidently adorned by the masterpieces of the first artists in fresco. But what particularly engaged my attention, was a great number of busts, and those of Spanish heroes, supported on jasper pedestals, and ranged round the saloon. There was oppor-

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tunity enough for examining all this splendor, since there was not even a foot-fall, nor the shadow of any one gliding along the passage, though my ears and eyes were incessantly on the watch for some inhabitant of this fairy desert.

On one side of the saloon there was a door ajar; by pushing it a little wider open, I discovered a range of apartments, with a light only in the farthest. What is to be done now? thought I within myself. Shall I go back, or take the liberty of marching forward, even to that chamber? To be sure, it was obvious that the most prudent step would be to make good my retreat; but curiosity was not to be repelled, or rather, to speak more truly, my star was in its ascendant. Advancing boldly from room to room, at length I reached that where the light was. It was a wax taper on a marble slab, in a magnificent candlestick. The first object that caught my eye was the gay furniture of this summer abode; but soon afterwards, casting a look towards a bed, of which the curtains were half undrawn on account of the heat, an object arrested my attention, which engrossed it with the deepest interest. A young lady, in spite of the thunderclaps which had been pealing round her, was sleeping there, motionless and undisturbed. I approached her very gently, and by the light of the taper I had seized, a complexion and features the most dazzling were submitted to my gaze. My spirits were all afloat at the discovery. A sensation of transport and delight came over me; but however my feelings might harass my own heart,

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my conviction of her high birth checked every presumptuous hope, and awe obtained a complete victory over desire. While I was drinking in floods of adoration at the shrine of her beauty, the goddess of my homage awoke.

You may well suppose her consternation, at seeing a man, an utter stranger, in her bed-chamber, and at midnight. She was terrified at this strange appearance, and uttered a loud shriek. I did my best to restore her composure, and throwing myself on my knees in the humblest posture, Madam, said I, fear nothing. My business here is not to hurt you. I was going on, but her alarm was so great that she was incapable of hearing my excuses. She called her women with a most vehement importunity, and as she could get no answer, she threw over her a thin night-gown at the foot of the bed, rushed rapidly out of the room, and darted into the apartments I had crossed, still calling her female establishment about her, as well as a younger sister whom she had under her care. I looked for nothing less than a posse of strapping footmen who were likely, without hearing my defence, to execute summary justice on so audacious a culprit; but by good luck, at least for me, her cries were to no purpose; they only roused an old domestic, who would have been but a sorry knight had any ravisher or magician invaded her repose. Nevertheless, assuming somewhat of courage from his presence, she asked me haughtily who I was, by what inlet and to what purpose I had presumptuously gained admission into her house. I

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began then to enter on my exculpation, and had no sooner declared that the open door of the summer-house in the garden had invited my entrance, than she exclaimed, as if thunderstruck, Just heaven! what an idea darts across my mind!

As she uttered these words, she caught at the wax light on the table; then ran through all the apartments one after another, without finding either her attendants or her sister. She remarked, too, that all their personals and wardrobe were carried off. With such a comment on her hasty suspicions, she came up to me, and said, in the hurried accent of suspense and perturbation, Traitor! add not hypocrisy to your other crimes. Chance has not brought you hither. You are in the train of Don Ferdinand de Leyva, and are an accomplice in his guilt. But hope not to escape; there are still people enough about me to secure you. Madam, said I, do not confound me with your enemies. Don Ferdinand de Leyva is a stranger to me; I do not even know who you are. You see before you an outcast, whom an affair of honor has compelled to fly from Madrid; and I swear by whatever is most sacred among men, that had not a storm overtaken me, I should never have set my foot over your threshold. Entertain, then, a more favorable opinion of me. So far from suspecting me for an accomplice in any plot against you, believe me ready to enlist in your defence, and to revenge your wrongs. These last words, and still more the sincere tone in which they were delivered, convinced the lady of my innocence,

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and she seemed no longer to look on me as her enemy; but if her anger abated, it was only that her grief might sway more absolutely. She began weeping most bitterly. Her tears called forth my sympathy, and my affliction was scarcely less poignant than her own, though the cause of this contagious sorrow was still to be ascertained. Yet it was not enough to mingle my tears with hers; in my impatience to become her defender and avenger, an impulse of terrific fury came over me. Madam, exclaimed I, what outrage have you sustained? Let me know it, and your injuries are mine. Would you have me hunt out Don Ferdinand, and stab him to the heart? Only tell me on whom your justice would fall, and they shall suffer. You have only to give the word. Whatever dangers, whatever certain evils may be attendant on the execution of your orders, the unknown, whom you thought to be in league with your enemies, will brave them all in your cause.

This enraptured devotion surprised the lady, and stopped the flowing of her tears. Ah! sir, said she, forgive this suspicion, and attribute it to the blindness of my cruel fate. A nobility of sentiment like this speaks at once to the heart of Seraphina; and while it undeceives, makes me the less repine at a stranger being witness of an affront offered to my family. Yes, I own my error, and revolt not, unknown as you are, from your proffered aid. But the death of Don Ferdinand is not what I require. Well, then, madam, resumed I, of what nature are

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the services you would enjoin me? Sir, replied Seraphina, the ground of my complaint is this. Don Ferdinand de Leyva is enamoured of my sister Julia, whom he met with by accident at Toledo, where we for the most part reside. Three months since, he asked her in marriage of the Count de Polan, my father, who refused his consent on account of an old grudge subsisting between the families. My sister is not yet fifteen; she must have been indiscreet enough to follow the evil counsels of my woman, whom Don Ferdinand has doubtless bribed; and this daring ruffian, advertised of our being alone at our country-house, has taken the opportunity of carrying off Julia. At least I should like to know what hiding-place he has chosen to deposit her in, that my father and my brother, who have been these two months at Madrid, may take their measures accordingly. For heaven's sake, added she, give yourself the trouble of examining the neighborhood of Toledo, an act so heinous cannot escape detection, and my family will owe you a debt of everlasting gratitude.

The lady was little aware how unseasonable an employment she was thrusting upon me. My escape from Castile could not be too soon effected; and yet how should such a reflection ever enter into her head, when it was completely superseded in mine by a more powerful suggestion? Delighted at finding myself important to the most lovely creature in the universe, I caught at the commission with eagerness, and promised to acquit myself of it with equal zeal and industry. In fact, I did not wait for daybreak, to go

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about fulfilling my engagement. A hasty leave of Seraphina gave me occasion to beg her pardon for the alarm I had caused her, and to assure her that she should speedily hear somewhat of my adventure. I went out as I came in, but so wrapped up in admiration of the lady, that it was palpable I was completely caught. My sense of this truth was the more confirmed by the eagerness with which I embarked in her cause, and by the romantic, gayly-colored bubbles which my passion blew. It struck my fancy that Seraphina, though engrossed by her affliction, had remarked the hasty birth of my love, without being displeased at the discovery. I even flattered myself that if I could furnish her with any certain intelligence of her sister, and the business should terminate in any degree to her satisfaction, my part in it would be remembered to my advantage.

Don Alphonso broke the thread of his discourse at this passage, and said to our aged host, I beg your pardon, father, if the fulness of my passion should lead me to dilate too long upon particulars, wearisome and uninteresting to a stranger. No, my son, replied the hermit, such particulars are not wearisome: I am interested to know the state and progress of your passion for the young lady you are speaking of; my counsels will be influenced by the minute detail you are giving me.

With my fancy heated by these seductive images, resumed the young man, I was two days hunting after Julia's ravisher: but in vain were all the inquiries that could be made; by no means I could devise was the

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least trace of him to be discovered. Deeply mortified at the unsuccessful issue of my search, I bent my steps back to Seraphina, whom I pictured to myself as overwhelmed with uneasiness. Yet she was in better spirits than might have been expected. She informed me that her success had been better than mine; for she had learned how her sister was disposed of. She had received a letter from Don Ferdinand himself, importing that after being privately married to Julia, he had placed her in a convent at Toledo. I have sent his letter to my father, pursued Seraphina. I hope the affair may be adjusted amicably, and that a solemn marriage will soon extinguish the feuds which have so long kept our respective families at variance.

When the lady had thus informed me of her sister's fate, she began making an apology for the trouble she had given me, as well as the danger into which she might imprudently have thrown me, by engaging my services in pursuit of a ravisher, without recollecting what I had told her, that an affair of honor had been the occasion of my flight. Her excuses were couched in such flattering terms, as to convert her very oversight into an obligation. As rest was desirable for me after my journey, she conducted me into the saloon, where we sat down together. She wore an undress gown of white taffety with black stripes, and a little hat of the same materials with black feathers; which gave me reason to suppose that she might be a widow. But she looked so young, that I scarcely knew what to think of it.

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If I was all impatient to get at her history, she was not less so to know who I was. She besought me to acquaint her with my name, not doubting, as she kindly expressed it, by my noble air, and still more by the generous pity which had made me enter so warmly into her interests, that I belonged to some considerable family. The question was not a little perplexing. My color came and went, my agitation was extreme: and I must own that, with less repugnance to the meanness of a falsehood than to the acknowledgment of a disgraceful truth, I answered that I was the son of Baron Steinbach, an officer of the German guard. Tell me, likewise, resumed the lady, why you left Madrid. Before you answer my question, I will insure you all my father's credit, as well as that of my brother Don Gaspard. It is the least mark of gratitude I can bestow on a gentleman who, for my service, has neglected the preservation even of his own life. Without further hesitation, I acquainted her with all the circumstances of my rencounter: she laid the whole blame on my deceased antagonist, and engaged to interest all her family in my favor.

When I had satisfied her curiosity, it seemed not unreasonable to plead in favor of my own. I inquired whether she was maid, wife, or widow. It is three years, answered she, since my father made me marry Don Diego de Lara; and I have been a widow these fifteen months. Madam, said I, by what misfortune were your wedded joys so soon interrupted? I am going to inform you, sir, resumed

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the lady, in return for the confidence you have reposed in me.

Don Diego de Lara was a very elegant and accomplished gentleman: but, though his affection for me was extreme, and every day was witness to some attempt at giving me pleasure, such as the most impassioned and most tender lover puts in practice to win the smile of her he loves; though he had a thousand estimable qualities, my heart was untouched by all his merit. Love is not always the offspring either of assiduity or desert. Alas! we are often captivated at first sight by we know not whom, nor why, nor how. To love, then, was not in my power. More disconcerted than gratified by his repeated offices of tenderness, which I received with a forced courtesy, but without real pleasure, if I accused myself in secret of ingratitude, I still thought myself an object as much of pity as of censure. To his unhappiness and my own, his delicacy more than kept pace with his affection. Not an action or a speech of mine, but he unravelled all its hidden motives, and fathomed all my thoughts, almost before they arose. The inmost recesses of my heart were laid open to his penetration. He complained without ceasing of my indifference; and esteemed himself only so much the more unfortunate in not being able to please me, as he was well assured that no rival stood in his way; for I was scarcely sixteen years old; and, before he paid his addresses to me, he had tampered with my woman, who had assured him that no one had hitherto attracted my attention.

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Yes, Seraphina, he would often say, I could have been contented that you had preferred some other to myself, and that there were no more fatal cause of your insensibility. My attentions and your own principles would get the better of such a juvenile prepossession; but I despair of triumphing over your coldness, since your heart is impenetrable to all the love I have lavished on you. Wearied with the repetition of the same strain, I told him that instead of disturbing his repose and mine by this excess of delicacy, he would do better in trusting to the effects of time. In fact, at my age, I could not be expected to enter into the refinements of so sentimental a passion; and Don Diego should have waited, as I warned him, for a riper period and more staid reflection. But, finding that a whole year had elapsed, and that he was no forwarder in my favor than on the first day, he lost all patience, or rather, his brain became distracted. Affecting to have important business at court, he took his leave, and went to serve as a volunteer in the Low Countries; where he soon found in the chances of war what he went to seek, the termination of his sufferings and of his life.

After the lady had finished her recital, her husband's uncommon character became the topic of our discourse. We were interrupted by the arrival of a courier, charged with a letter for Seraphina from the Count de Polan. She begged my permission to read it; and as she went on, I observed her to grow pale; and to become dreadfully agitated. When she had finished, she raised her eyes upward, heaved a long

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sigh, and her face was in a moment bathed with her tears. Her sorrow sat heavily on my feelings. My spirits were greatly disturbed; and, as if it were a forewarning of the blow impending over my head, a death-like shudder crept through my frame, and my faculties were all benumbed. Madam, said I, in accents half choked with apprehension, may I ask of what dire events that letter brings the tidings? Take it, sir, answered Seraphina most dolefully, while she held out the letter to me. Read for yourself what my father has written. Alas! you are but too deeply concerned in the contents.

At these words, which made my blood run cold, I took the letter with a trembling hand, and found in it the following intelligence: "Your brother, Don Gaspard, fought yesterday at the Prado. He received a small sword wound, of which he died this day; and declared before he breathed his last that his antagonist was the son of Baron Steinbach, an officer of the German guard. As misfortunes never come alone, the murderer has eluded my vengeance by flight; but wherever he may have concealed himself, no pains shall be spared to hunt him out. I am going to write to the magistrates all round the country, who will not fail to take him into custody, if he passes through any of the towns in their jurisdiction, and by the notices I am going to circulate, I hope to cut off his retreat in the country or at the seaports. — THE COUNT DE POLAN."

Conceive into what a ferment this letter threw all my thoughts. I remained for some moments mo-

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tionless and without the power of speech. In the midst of my confusion, I too plainly saw the destructive bearing of Don Gaspard's death on the passion I had imbibed. My despair was unbounded at the thought. I threw myself at Seraphina's feet, and offering her my naked sword, Madam, said I, spare the Count de Polan the necessity of seeking farther for a man who might possibly withdraw himself from his resentment. Be yourself the avenger of your brother: offer up his murderer as the victim of your own hand: now, strike the blow. Let this very weapon, which terminated his life, cut short the sad remnant of his adversary's days. Sir, answered Seraphina, a little softened by my behavior, I loved Don Gaspard, so that though you killed him in fair and manly hostility, and though he brought his death upon himself, you may rest assured that I take up my father's quarrel. Yes, Don Alphonso, I am your decided enemy, and will do against you all that the ties of blood and friendship require at my hands. But I will not take advantage of your evil star: in vain has it delivered you into my grasp: if honor arms me against you, the same sentiment forbids to pursue a cowardly revenge. The rights of hospitality must be inviolable, and I will not repay such service as you have rendered me with the treachery of an assassin. Fly! make your escape, if you can, from our pursuit and from the rigor of the laws, and save your forfeit life from the dangers that beset it.

What then, madam, returned I, when vengeance

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is in your own hands, do you turn it over to the laws, which may, perhaps, be too slow for your impatience? Nay! rather stab a wretch who is not worthy of your forbearance. No, madam, maintain not so noble and so generous a proceeding with one like me. Do you know who I am? All Madrid takes me for Baron Steinbach's son; yet am I nothing better than a foundling, whom he brought up from charity. I know not even who were guilty of my existence. No matter, interrupted Seraphina, with precipitation, as if my last words had given her new uneasiness, though you were the lowest of mankind I would do what honor bids. Well, madam, said I, since a brother's death is insufficient to excite your thirst after my blood, I will exasperate your hatred still farther by a new offence, of which I trust you will never pardon the boldness. I dote on you: I could not behold your charms without being dazzled by them: and, in spite of the cloud in which my destiny was enveloped, I had cherished the hope of being united to you. I was so infatuated by my passion, or rather by my pride, as to flatter myself that heaven, which perhaps conceals from me my birth in mercy, might discover it one day, and enable me without a blush to acquaint you with my real name. After this injurious avowal, can you hesitate a moment about punishing me?

This rash declaration, replied the lady, would doubtless prove offensive at any other season; but I forgive it in consideration of the trouble which bewilders you. Besides, my own condition so en-

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grosses me, as to render me deaf to any strange ideas that may escape you. Once more, Don Alphonso, added she, shedding tears, begone far from a house which you have cast into mourning; every moment of your longer stay adds pungency to my distress. I no longer oppose your will, madam, returned I, preparing to take my leave: absence from you must then be my portion: but do not suppose that, anxious for the preservation of a life which is become hateful to you, I go to seek an asylum where I may be sheltered from your search. No, no; I bare my breast to your resentment. I shall wait with impatience at Toledo for the fate which you design me; and by surrendering at once to my pursuers, shall myself forward the completion of my miseries.

At the conclusion of this speech I withdrew. My horse was returned to me, and I went to Toledo, where I abode eight days, and really with so little care to conceal myself, that I know not how or why I have escaped an arrest; for I cannot suppose that the Count de Polan, whose whole soul is set on cutting off my retreat, should not have been aware that I was likely to pass through Toledo. Yesterday I left that town, where it should seem as if I was tired of my liberty, and without betaking myself to any fixed course of travelling, I came to this hermitage, like a man who had no reason to be ashamed of showing himself. Such, father, was the cause of my absence and distraction. I beseech you to assist me with your counsels.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD HERMIT TURNS OUT AN EXTRAORDINARY GENIUS, AND GIL BLAS FINDS HIMSELF AMONG HIS FORMER ACQUAINTANCE.

When Don Alphonso had concluded the melancholy recital of his misfortunes, the old hermit said to him, My son, you have been excessively rash in carrying so long at Toledo. I consider in a very different light from that you affect to place it in, what you have told me of your story; and your love for Seraphina seems to me to be sheer madness. Take my word for it, you will do well to cancel that young lady from your remembrance; she never can be of your communion. Retreat like a skilful general, when you cannot act with effect on the offensive; and pursue your fortune on another field, where success may smile on your endeavors. You will be terribly out of luck to kill the brother of the next young lady who may chance to succeed this only possible object of your affection.

He was going to add many other inducements to resignation, in such a case as Don Alphonso's, when we saw another hermit enter our retreat, with a well stuffed wallet slung across his shoulders. He was on his return, with the charitable contributions of all the good folks in the town of Cuença; and the gathering did credit to the religion of the age. He looked younger than his companion, in spite of his thick, foxy beard. Welcome home, brother An-

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tony, said the elder of the two recluses; what news do you bring us from town? Bad enough, answered the carroty friar, putting into his hands a paper, folded in the form of a letter; this little instrument will inform you. The hoary sage opened it, and after reading on with an increased attention, as the contents seemed to grow more interesting, exclaimed, Heaven's will be done! Since the combustion is anticipated, we have only to fall in with the humor of our fate. Let us change our dialect, Signor Don Alphonso! pursued he, addressing his discourse to my young companion: you behold in me a man, like yourself, who has been a broad mark for the wantonness of fortune to take aim at. Word is sent me from Cuença, a town at the distance of a league hence, that some backbiter has been blackening my fair fame in the esteem of justice; who is coming with her hue and cry to disturb the repose of these rural scenes, and to lay her paw upon my person. But an old fox is too cunning to be caught in a trap. This is not the first time that I have cut and run before the bloodhounds of the law. But, thanks to myself for having my wits about me, I have always ended the chase in a whole skin, and held myself in readiness for another. It is now time to assume another form; for, whether you like me best in my old skin or my new, I cast my hermit's decrepit slough, to bask in the sunshine of youth and vigor.

To suit the action to the word, he threw off the encumbrance of his ecclesiastical petticoat, and stood

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forth to view in a doublet of black serge with slashed sleeves. Then off went his cap, and snap went a string, which supported the hoary honors of a beard, and our anchorite was at once transformed to a brawny ruffian of eight-and-twenty or thirty. Brother Antony, following a good example, discarded the outward show of religion, treated his fiery beard as the snowy one had been handled just before, and pulled out of an old worm-eaten trunk a sorry rag of a cassock, with which he invested his person. But what words can express my surprise, when Signor Don Raphael presented himself to my view, like a phœnix from the ashes of the old bead-counter! To complete the trick of the pantomime, brother Antony was turned into my faithful vassal and trusty squire, Ambrose de Lamela. Here are miracles! exclaimed I, in a quandary; as far as I can perceive, we are all hail fellow well met! You never were more lucky in your life, Signor Gil Blas, said Don Raphael, with a brazen-faced good humor: you have fallen among old friends when you least expected it. It must be owned you have a crow to pluck with us; but let the past be buried in oblivion, and thank heaven, here we are together again. Ambrose and I will serve under your banner; and let me tell you, you will have subalterns of no contemptible prowess. You may object to our morals; but they are better in the main than many a hypocrite's pretensions. We never assassinate, and rarely maltreat; and that in pure self-defence. The only liberty we take with society is to live at free quar-

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ters: and though robbery may be considered as containing some little spice of injustice, the necessity we labor under of committing it restores its equilibrium to the scale. Even join your fortune with ours: you will lead a life of hazard, but of variety. Our predatory peregrinations have every pastoral beauty except innocence, and the want of that is more than counterpoised by subtlety and stratagem. Not but, with all our forecast, a certain mechanical concatenation of second causes sometimes frustrates our best concerted projects, and drags our philosophy through the mire. But a ducking now and then only makes us swim the better. The seasons must all be taken in their turns: the blanks as well as the prizes must be drawn in the cheating lottery of life.

Courteous stranger, pursued the pretended hermit, speaking to Don Alphonso, we extend the proposal of partnership to you, and it may be a question whether you will better yourself by rejecting it, in the lamentable condition of your affairs; for, to say nothing of the chance medley for which you are at hide and seek, your fortune is probably a little out at elbows. Most lamentably so, said Don Alphonso; and hence, since the truth must out, are my forebodings more dark than even my present evils. That is the very thing! replied Don Raphael. You were sent by our better genius to join the party. You will find no such good birth in the honest part of the world. Your wants will all be supplied, and you may laugh at the vigilance of your pursuers.

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There is not a corner in all Spain which we have not ferreted out; those who are always on the scamper see a great deal of the country. We are perfect connoisseurs in landscape, and affect Salvator Rosa's rugged scenery. There we graze in peace and freedom, secure from the brutality of justice. Don Alphonso expressed himself very much obliged to them for their kind invitation; and finding neither money in his purse, nor contrivance to procure it in his pericranium, made up his mind at once not to stand upon punctilio with morality. I too was led into a looser course than agreed with my rigid principles, by a growing friendship for this young man, whom I could not find in my heart to abandon in so perilous an enterprise.

We all four agreed to set off in a body, and never to part company. The question was put whether we should sound a retreat on the instant, or first give a peremptory summons to a flagon of excellent wine, which brother Antony had invested by regular approaches at Cuença the day before; but Raphael, a more experienced general than any of us, represented that the first thing to be done was to render our own camp impregnable, for which purpose he proposed that we should march all night, to gain a very thick wood between Villardesa and Almodabar, where we should halt, as in a friendly country, and recruit after the fatigues of the campaign. These general orders were approved of in council. Our lay hermits then went about packing up their baggage and provisions, which were swung in two

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bundles across the back of Don Alphonso's horse. We were not long in our preparations, after which we sheered off from the hermitage, leaving a rich booty to legal rapine in the saintly paraphernalia of the two hermits; including a white beard and a red one, two rickety bedsteads, a table without a leg, a chest without a bottom, two chairs without any seats, and an unmutilated image of St. Pacomo.

Our march was continued the whole night, and we began to chafe and feel other inconveniences, when at daybreak we hailed the wood where our toils were to end. Sailors after a long voyage work the ship with double alacrity at the sight of their native land. So it was with us; we pushed forward, and got to our journey's end by sunrise. Dashing into the thickest of the wood, we pitched upon a retired and pleasant spot, where the turf was circled in by tall and branching oaks, whose gigantic limbs, interwoven over our heads, formed a natural vault, not to be penetrated even by noon-day heat. We took the bridle off the horse to let him feed after he was unloaded. Then down we sat, pulling out of brother Antony's wallet some large pieces of bread and good substantial slices of roast meat, at which we began pegging with all possible pertinacity. Nevertheless, let our appetites be as obstinate as they might, we every now and then suspended the fray to spar a little with the flagon, which returned our blows till it made us reel again.

About the end of the conflict, Don Raphael said to Don Alphonso, My brave comrade, after the con-

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fidence you have reposed in me, it is but fair that in my turn I should recount the history of my life to you with the same sincerity. You will do me a great favor, answered the young man. And an equal one to me, chimed in I. My curiosity is all alive to know your adventures, for doubtless they must afford much matter of useful speculation. You may rest assured of that, replied Don Raphael; and I mean to leave behind me a history of my own times. The composition shall be the amusement of my old age, for I am as yet in the prime of life, and mean to furnish in propriâ personâ many new hints for my commonplace-book. But we are all weary; let us recruit with some hours of sleep. While we three lie down, Ambrose shall keep watch for fear of a surprise, and shall then take a nap in his turn. For though, to all appearance, we are here in perfect safety, it is always good to keep a sentry at the outposts. After this precaution he stretched himself along upon the grass. Don Alphonso did the same. I followed their example, and Lamela performed the office of a scout.

Don Alphonso, so far from getting any rest, was incessantly brooding over his misfortunes, and I could not get a wink of sleep. As for Don Raphael, he snored most sonorously. But he awoke in little more than an hour, when, finding us in a listening mood, he said to Lamela, My friend Ambrose, you may now yield to the gentle influence of Morpheus. No, no, answered Lamela, my sleepy fit is over; and though I know all the passages of your life by

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rote, they are so instructive to the practitioners of our art and mystery, that I do not care how often I hear the tale over again. Without further preface, Don Raphael began the narrative of his adventures in these terms.

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BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF DON RAPHAEL.

I MADE my entrance on the stage of life at Madrid, where my mother was an actress, famous for her dramatic, and infamous for her intriguing talents. Her name was Lucinda. As for my father, every man must have one; but my arithmetic is too scanty to determine the number of mine. It might indeed be a matter of history, that such or such a man of fashion was dangling after my mother at the epoch of my arrival in this system; but then, that mere fact would by no means warrant a deduction that any individual gallant of the mother must therefore be the father of the child. A lady, so eminent as she was in so notorious and wholesale a profession, must have many strings to her bow; where her blandishments are most publicly lavished, her favors are most sparingly bestowed: there is a show article or two for public exhibition, but her every-day wares are cheap, and hackneyed to the meanest purchaser.

There is nothing like taking scandal by the beard, and treating the opinion of the world with heroic indifference. Lucinda, instead of cooping me up in a

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garret at home, made no scruple about owning her little bastard, but took me in her hand to the theatre with a modest assurance, regardless how the tongue of rumor might babble at her expense, or how the laugh of malice might peal at my unlucky appearance. In short, I was her pet, and came in for the caresses of all the men who frequented the house. One would have sworn that nature pleaded in my favor, and inspired each of them with a father's pride in the brat they had clubbed for. The twelve first years of my life were suffered to waste away in all kinds of frivolous amusements. Scarcely did they teach me to read and write. Still less was it thought of any consequence to initiate me in the principles of my religion. To dance, to sing, to play on the guitar, was the sum total of my early attainments. With these gifts and graces for my only acquisitions, the Marquis of Leganez asked for me to be about his only son, who was nearly of my own age. Lucinda gave her consent without reluctance, and it was then that I began to mind a little what I was about. Young Leganez could not reproach me with my ignorance; his little lordship was not cast in a scientific mould, for he scarcely knew a letter of his alphabet, though he had been under private tuition for fifteen months. None of his masters could make anything of him; patience was never formed to engage in so unequal a match. To be sure, they were expressly forbid to exercise any severity on his noble carcass; their orders were to teach, not to torture him; and this tender precaution, acting on a

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subject of insufferably untoward dispositions, was the means of throwing to the dogs all the mental physic they poured in; he would none of it.

But the verb-grinder engendered in his noddle a most ingenious device, by which to keep this troublesome young lordling in awe, without trenching on his foolish father's injunctions. The scheme was no other than to flog me whenever that scapegrace Leganez had incurred the penalty of the rod, and this vicarious execution was inflicted with the utmost rigor. My consent to the transfer had never been asked, and there was nothing in the act itself to recommend it; so that my only chance was to run away, and appeal to my mother against so arbitrary a discipline. However her maternal feelings might inwardly revolt, no trace of woman's weakness could be detected in her manner of receiving my complaint. The Leganez connection was too important to be lost for a few whippings; and away went she, dragging her culprit into the presence of his tormentor, who, by this act of hers, became master of broom field. Experience had convinced him that the success of his invention corresponded with its felicity. He therefore went on improving the mind and manners of the little grandee at the expense of my skin. Remorse for his delinquencies was to be excited only by sympathy; so that whenever it became necessary to make a bloody example, my seat of vengeance was firked most unmercifully. The running account between young Leganez and me was all on one side, and scarcely a day passed but he sinned on tick and

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suffered by attorney. By the nearest calculation of whole numbers, there went somewhere about a hundred cuts to teach him each single letter of the alphabet; so that if you multiply 100 by 24 for stupidity, and add a 0 to the amount for moral offences, you will have the sum total of the belaboring that his education cost me.

This thick and threefold companionship with birch was not the only rub; my path through this family was more beset with thorns than sweetened by flowers. As my birth and connections were no secret, the whole of the establishment, to the very refuse of the household, the stable boys and scullions, twitted me with my shameful origin. This stuck so terribly in my throat that I made my escape once more, but not without borrowing my tutor's ready money, amounting to upwards of a hundred and fifty ducats, for an indefinite period, and without interest. Thus was the account settled between us; since he had made a property of my hide for a scarecrow, it was but fair that I should have a finger in the earnings of his arm. For a first attempt at thieving both the plan and execution were hopeful. A hue and cry was raised for two days; it was hot while it lasted, but I lay snug, and they missed me. Madrid was no longer a fit hiding-place; so I took to cover in Toledo, and the hounds were thrown out.

I was just then entering into my fifteenth year. What a happy fellow, at such an early age, to shape my own conduct and be in a condition of forming a

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set of morals for myself! I soon scraped acquaintance with some pleasant youths, who rescued me from the dominion of prejudice, and shared liberally with me in the sin of spending what was not my own. By degrees I rose in society, and leagued myself with a set of professional sharpers, who found me so fine a subject to work upon, that a short time, with plenty of practice, put me in possession of all the most desperate jobs. At the expiration of five years, an itch for travelling laid hold of me. I therefore took leave of my comrades, and got as far as Alcantara, wishing to commence my peregrinations with the province of Estremadura. In this my first excursion, an opportunity of keeping in my hand occurred; and I was too diligent a practitioner to let it escape. As I was on foot, and loaded moreover with a pretty heavy knapsack, I halted from time to time to avail myself of the shade, and recruit a little under the trees which lined the highway. At one of these baits I picked up two young gentlemen, who were chatting at their ease upon the grass, and inhaling the freshness of the breeze. My mode of accosting them was suited to the occasion; nor did its familiarity seem to be taken in ill part. The eldest could not be more than fifteen — a couple of as practicable greenhorns as ever fell into the hands of a man of genius. Courteous stranger, said the youngest, we are the sons of two rich citizens at Placentia. Longing extremely to see the kingdom of Portugal, we have each of us begged a hundred pistoles from our friends, and are setting out to

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satisfy our curiosity. Travelling on foot as we do, we shall be able to get a good way with that supply, shall we not? What do you think of it? If I had as much, answered I, they might take me who could catch me. I would scour over the four known quarters of the globe, and then set out on new discoveries. Fire and fury! Two hundred pistoles! Why, it is an entail for a dukedom! You ought to lay by out of the interest. If it is agreeable to you, gentlemen, I will club with you as far as Almeria, whither I am going to take possession of an estate left me by an uncle who was settled there for twenty years or upwards.

My young cockneys testified at once the pleasure they should derive from my company. Whereupon, when we were all three a little refreshed, we trudged on towards Alcantara, where we arrived early in the afternoon. No inn but the best was fit to hold such guests. We asked for a room, and were shown into one where there was a press with a good strong lock upon it. Supper was ordered without delay; but as some time was required to get it ready, I proposed to my travelling companions a gentle saunter about the town. The party seemed perfectly agreeable. We locked up our knapsacks in the press, the key of which one of the citizens put in his pocket, and out sallied we from the inn. The churches were the best lions we met with in our way; and while we were gaping about the principal, I pretended to have recollected on a sudden some very urgent business. Gentlemen, said I to my companions, it has just

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come across me that a good man of Toledo gave me a commission to say two words on his behalf to a merchant who lives hard by this church. Have the goodness to wait for me here; I will be back in a moment. With this excuse, I went off like a shot, in the direction of our inn. The press was my point of attack — I forced the lock, ransacked the baggage of my young citizens, and laid a sacrilegious hand on their pistoles. Poor youths! How they were to pay their reckoning, it was not for me to presume even to guess, for most assuredly I stripped them of all the natural means. After this feat, I decamped as expeditiously as my legs could carry me from the town, and took the direction of Merida, without caring a curse what became of the young brood I had plucked.

Such a windfall as this placed me in a condition of travelling merrily. Though in the very blush of youth, a certain forecast was not wanting to carry me discreetly through the world, and keep my head above water. It must be admitted without question, that I was a youth of forward parts for my age, and unfettered by the prejudices of innocence. I determined to buy a mule, and cheapened one at the first market town. My knapsack was metamorphosed into a portmanteau, and by degrees I began to put on the man of consequence. On the third day a man came across me singing vespers with lungs like a pair of bellows on the highway. By his air, he seemed to be a musician of the church establishment, and I accosted him accordingly. Well done, my

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holy howler of the hallelujahs! You sing your penitential ditties at a good jovial pitch. To all appearance you sol-fa with your whole heart and soul. Good sir, replied he, I belong, with your good leave, to the musical department of the catholic church; and it is my common practice to keep my devotion and my wind in play by the rehearsal of an anthem or two as I travel along the road.

With this disposition to be sociable, we soon got into conversation. It was clear to me that I had fallen in with a character not to be despised in point of shrewdness, nor indisposed to society and merriment. He was four or five-and-twenty. My companion being on foot, I slackened my pace, for the pleasure of chatting with him. Among other things, we talked about Toledo. I am perfectly well acquainted with that city, said the brazen-lunged torturer of anthems. It was my residence for a considerable time, and my connections there are not altogether contemptible. And in what part of the town, interrupted I, did you reside? In the New Street, was his answer. I was hand in glove with Don Vincent de Buena Garra, Don Matthias de Cordello, and two or three other gentlemen of very considerable fashion. We lived together, took our meals at the same mess, and, in short, were scarcely ever asunder. It was a charming society! This avowal was no small surprise to me, for it is to be understood, that the gentlemen whose names he cited with so pompous an air were the very sharpers with whom I had been affiliated at Toledo. Why,

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thou degenerate vicar choral! exclaimed I, these fine blades of whom thou hast been boasting are among the number of my acquaintance also, for I too have lived with them in the New Street; we were hand in glove, took our meals at the same mess, and, in short, were scarcely ever asunder. You are a wag! replied he, with a knowing wink; that is to say, you got into the gang three years ago, when I left it. My motive for quitting such a worshipful fraternity, resumed I, was an itch for travelling. I mean to make the tour of Spain. A little more knowledge of the world will make me quite another thing. Doubtless, said he, there is no possible way but travelling to rub off the rust, or to bring wit, talent, and address to perfection. It is for the self-same reason that I too turned my back upon Toledo, though the time glided away there very agreeably. But thanks to a kind providence, which has yoked me with a laborer in my own vineyard, when I least expected it. Let us join our forces, let us travel the same road, let us make a joint-stock of our neighbors' purses, let us rob, let us cheat, let us avail ourselves of every opportunity that may offer of exemplifying our theory, and improving our practice, in the noble art on which our skill is employed.

The proposal was made in so candid a spirit, so like a citizen of the world, untainted with the selfishness of your honest men, that I closed in with it at once. My confidence was surrendered at the first summons to the frankness with which he volunteered his own. We spoke our free hearts each to the

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other. I dilated all my pilgrimage, and he spake of most disastrous chances, of moving accidents through which he had passed even from his boyish days to this very moment of his ripe and rampant roguery. It appeared that he was on his way from Portalegre, whence he had been obliged to decamp with the utmost expedition on account of a little swindling transaction in which his luck happened not to keep pace with his ingenuity. The habit he wore was sacrilegiously adopted as a cloak to his person and real character, since he thought it safest to be near the church, however far from God. Thus did we two share all our counsel, and pledge our brother's vows, till we grew together like a double cherry, and determined, with two seeming bodies but one heart, to incorporate our voices and minds in some master-stroke at Merida. If it took, well and good; if not, we had only to cut and run. From this moment, community of goods, that pure and simple feature of patriarchal life, was enacted as a law between us. Moralez, it is true, for that was my fellow-traveller's name, did not find himself in the most splendid condition possible. His funds were limited to five or six ducats, with a few little articles in a bag. I therefore was the moneyed man of the firm; but then there was brass in his forehead for an inexhaustible coinage, and the seeming of a saint when he played the devil most. So on we journeyed on the ride and tie principle, and arrived in humble cavalcade at Merida.

We put up at an inn near the skirts of the town,

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where my comrade changed his dress. When he had rigged himself in layman's attire, we took a turn up and down to reconnoitre the ground, and see if we could pick out some opportunity of laboring in our vocation. Had it been our good fortune to have lived before Homer, that old apologist for sharping by wholesale would have dignified our excursion with a simile.

> Not half so keen, fierce vultures of the chase
> Stoop from the mountains on the feathered race, &c.

To descend into plain prose, we were ruminating on the chapter of accidents, and hammering out some theme for the employment of our industry, when we espied a gray-headed old gentleman in the street, sword in hand, defending himself against three men who were thrusting at him with all their might and main. The unfairness of the match was what stuck in my throat; so that flying, with the spirit of a prize-fighter, to see fair play, I made common cause with the old man. Moralez followed up my blows. We proved ourselves a match for the three assailants, and put them completely to the rout.

Our rescued friend was profuse in his acknowledgments. We are in rapture, said I, at our good luck in being here so seasonably for your assistance; but let us at least know to whom we have been so fortunate as to be serviceable; and what inducement those three men could possibly have for their murderous attempt. Gentlemen, replied he, my obligations are too great to hesitate about satisfying your curiosity; my name is Jerome de Moyadas, a gentleman of this

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town, living on my means. One of these cut-throat rascals, from whom you have rescued me, professes to be in love with my daughter. He asked her of me in marriage within these few days; and for want of gaining my consent in a quiet way, has just attempted to force himself into my daughter's good graces by sending me into the other world. And may we take the liberty, rejoined I, of inquiring further, why you were so obdurate to the proposals of this enamoured swain? I will explain the whole to you at once, said he. I had a brother, a merchant in this town; his name was Austin. Two months ago he happened to be at Calatrava, and took up his abode with his correspondent, Juan Velez de la Membrilla. They got to be as loving as turtles; and my brother, to clinch the connection, engaged my daughter Florence to his good friend's son, not doubting but he had influence enough with me to redeem his pledge when he returned to Merida. Accordingly, he no sooner opened himself on the subject than I consented out of pure fraternal affection. He sent Florence's picture to Calatrava; but, alas! he did not live to put the finishing hand to his own work. We laid him with his forefathers three weeks ago! On his death-bed, he besought me not to dispose of my girl but in favor of his correspondent's son. I satisfied his mind on that point; and this is the reason why I have refused Florence to the suitor by whom I was assaulted, though the match would have been a very desirable one. But my word is my idol; and we are in daily expectation of Juan Velez de la

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Membrilla's heir, who is to be my son-in-law, though I know no more of him, nor of his father neither, than if they were just imported from an undiscovered island. But I beg pardon; this is an old man's garrulity. Yet you yourselves led me into the scrape.

This tale did I swallow with a greedy ear; and pouncing at once upon a part to play, which my fruitful imagination suggested, I put on an air of inordinate surprise, and ventured at all hazards to lift my eyes upward to a purer region. Then turning to my father-in-law, with an expression of feeling which nothing but hypocrisy could personate, Ah! Signor de Moyadas, is it possible that, on my arrival at Merida, I should enjoy the heartfelt triumph of rescuing from foul assassination the honored parent of my peerless love? This exclamation produced all the astonishment it was levelled to excite in the old citizen. Even Moralez himself stared like an honest man, and showed by his face that there was a degree of impudence to which his conceptions had not hitherto risen. What! do not my ears deceive me? exclaimed the old gentleman. And are you really the son of my brother's correspondent? Really and truly, Signor Jerome de Moyadas, rejoined I, with impregnable effrontery, and a hug round his neck that had nearly sent him after his brother. Behold the selected mortal of his species, to whose arms the adorable Florence is devoted! But these nuptial anticipations, transporting as they are, must yield to the anguish of my

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soul for the demise of their founder. Poor Austin! He is gone, and we must all follow! I should be ingratitude personified, if my heart was not lacerated and rent by the death of a man to whom I owe all my hopes of bliss. At the term of this period, I squeezed good Jerome's weasand once more, and drew the back of my hand across my eyes, to wipe away the tears it had not been convenient to shed. Moralez, who by this time had conned over the pretty pickings to be made out of this juggle, was not wanting to play his underpart. He passed himself off for my servant, and improved upon his master in lamentation for the untimely death of Signor Austin. My honored master Jerome! exclaimed he, what a loss have you sustained, since your brother is no more! He was such an honest man! Honest men are not to be met with every day. A superfine sample of commerce! A dealer in friendship without a percentage! A dealer in merchandise without an underhand advantage! A dealer who dealt as dealers very seldom do deal.

We had our hands to play against a man who was a novice at the game. Simple and gullible, so far from smelling out the rat, he took his stink for a nosegay. And why, said he, did you not come straight to my house? It was not friendly to put up at an inn. On the footing we are likely to be upon, there should be none of those punctilios. Sir, said Moralez, helping me out of the scrape, my master is a little too much given to stand upon ceremony. Though to be sure, in the present instance,

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he is in some degree excusable for declining to appear before you in this uncouth trim. We have been robbed upon the road, and have lost all our travelling equipage. My lad, interrupted I, has let the cat out of the bag, Signor de Moyadas. This unlucky accident has prevented me from paying my respects sooner. True love is diffident; nor could I venture in this garb into the presence of a mistress who was unacquainted with my person. I was therefore waiting the return of a servant whom I have sent to Calatrava. Such a trifle, rejoined the old man, must not deprive us of your company; and I insist upon it, that you make my house your home from this very moment.

With such sort of importunity, he forced me into his family: but as we were on our way, the pretended robbery was a natural topic of conversation; and I should have made light of my baggage, though the loss was very considerable, had not Florence's picture unluckily formed a part of the booty! The old codger chuckled at that, and observed, that such a loss was easily repaired: the original was worth five hundred per cent. more than the copy. To make me amends, as soon as we got home, he called his daughter, a girl of not more than sixteen, with a person to have reclaimed a libertine, if beauty ever possessed that power except in romance. You behold, said he, the bale of goods my late brother has consigned to you. O, my good sir! exclaimed I, in an impassioned tone, words are not wanting to assure me that this must be the lovely Florence:

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those bewitching features are engraven on my memory, their impression is indelible on my heart. If the portrait I have lost, the mere outline of these embodied charms, could kindle passion by its cold and lifeless likeness, judge what must be my agitation, my transport at this moment. Such language is too flattering to be sincere, said Florence; nor am I so weak and vain as to be persuaded that my merits warrant it. That is right; interchange your fine speeches, my children! This was a good-natured encouragement from the father, who at once left me alone with his daughter, and taking Moralez aside, said to him, My friend, those who made so free with your baggage, doubtless did not stand upon any ceremony with your money. Very true, sir, answered my colleague; an overpowering band of robbers poured down upon us near Castil-Blazo, and left us not a rag but what we carry on our backs; but we are in momentary expectation of receiving bills of exchange, and then we shall appear once more like ourselves.

While you are waiting for your bills of exchange, replied the old man, taking a purse out of his pocket, here are a hundred pistoles with which you may do as you please. O, sir! rejoined Moralez, as if he were shocked, my master will never take them. You do not know him. Heaven and earth! he is a man of the nicest scruples in money matters. Not one of your shabby fellows, always sponging upon his friends, and ready to take up money wherever he can get it! Run-

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ning in debt is ratsbane to him. If he is to beg his bread or go into a hospital, why, there is an end of it! but as for borrowing, he will never be reduced to that. So much the better, said the good burgess: I value him the more for his independence. Running in debt is a mean thing; it ought to be ratsbane to him and everybody else. Your people of quality, to be sure, may plead prescription in their favor; there is a sort of privileged swindling, not incompatible with high honor, in high life. If tradesmen were to be paid, they would be too nearly on a level with their employers. But as your master has such upright principles, heaven forbid they should be violated in this house! Since any offer of pecuniary assistance would hurt his feelings, we must say no more about it. As the point seemed to be settled, the purse was for steering its course back again into the pocket; but my provident partner laid hold of Signor de Moyadas by the arm, and delayed the convoy. Stay, sir, said he: whatever aversion my master may have to borrowing on a general principle, and considered as borrowing, yet there is a light in which, with good management, he may be brought to look kindly on your hundred pistoles. In fact, it is only in a mercantile point of view, as an affair of debtor and creditor between strangers, that he holds this formal doctrine; but he is free and easy enough where he is on a family footing. Why, there is his own father! It is only ask and have; and he does ask and have accordingly. Now you are going to be a second

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father to him, and are fairly entitled to be put on the same confidential footing. He is a young man of nice discrimination, and will doubtless think you entitled to the compliment.

By thus shifting his ground, Moralez got possession of the old gentleman's purse. As for the girl and myself, we were engaged in a little agreeable flirting; but were soon joined by our honored parent, who interrupted our tête-à-tête. He told Florence how much he was obliged to me, and expressed his gratitude to myself, in terms which left no doubt of our being a very happy family. I made the most of so favorable a disposition, by telling the good man, that if he would bestow on me an acknowledgment the nearest to my heart, he must hasten my marriage with his daughter. My eagerness was not taken amiss. He assured me, that in three days at latest I should be a happy bridegroom, and that instead of six thousand ducats, the fortune he had promised to give my wife, he would make it up ten, as a substantial proof how deeply he felt himself indebted to me for the service I had rendered him.

Here we were, therefore, quite at home with our good friend Jerome de Moyadas, sumptuously entertained, and catching every now and then a vista vision of ten thousand ducats, with which we proposed to march off abruptly from Merida. Our transports, however, were not without their alloy. It was by no means improbable that within three days the *bonâ fide* son of Juan Velez de la Mem-

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brilla might come and interrupt our sport. This fear had for its foundation more than the weakness of our nerves. On the very next morning, a sort of clodpole, with a portmanteau across his shoulders, knocked at the door of Florence's father. I was not at home at the time, but my colleague had to bear the brunt of it. Sir, said the rustic to our sagacious friend, I belong to the young gentleman at Calatrava who is to be your son-in-law — to Signor de la Membrilla. We have both just come off our journey: he will be here in an instant, and sent me forward to prepare you for his arrival. Hardly had these unaccountable tidings been announced, when the master appeared in person; which stretched the old fellow's blinkers into a stare, and put Moralez a little to the blush.

Young Pedro was what we call a tall fellow of his inches. He began at once paying his compliments to the master of the house; but the good man did not give him time to finish his speech, and turning towards my partner in iniquity, asked what was the meaning of all this. Hereupon Moralez, whose power of face was not to be exceeded by any human impudence, boldly asserted our identity, and said to the old gentleman, Sir, these two men here before you belong to the gang which pillaged us on the highway. I have a perfect recollection of their features; and in particular could swear to him who has the effrontery to call himself the son of Signor Juan Velez de la Membrilla. The old citizen gulped down the lies of Moralez like nectar, and told the

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intruders, on the supposition of their being the impostors, Gentlemen, you are come the day after the fair: the trick was a very good one, but it will not pass; the enemy has taken the ground before you. Pedro de la Membrilla has been under this roof since yesterday. Have all your wits about you, answered the young man from Calatrava; you are nursing a viper in your bosom. Be assured that Juan Velez de la Membrilla has neither chick nor child but myself. And what relation is the hangman to you? replied the old dupe: you are better known than liked in this house. Can you look this young man in the face? or can you deny that you robbed his master? If I were anywhere but under your roof, rejoined Pedro, in a rage, I would punish the insolence of this scoundrel who fancies to pass me off for a highwayman. He is indebted for his safety to your presence, which puts a curb upon my choler. Good sir, pursued he, you are grossly imposed on. I am the favored youth to whom your brother Austin has promised your daughter. Is it your pleasure for me to produce the whole correspondence with my father on the subject of the impending match? Will you be satisfied with Florence's picture sent me by him as a present a little while before his death?

No, put in the old burgess crustily; the picture will work just as strongly on my conviction as the letters. I am perfectly aware by what chance they all fell into your hands; and if you will take a stupid fellow's advice, Merida will soon be rid of such

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rubbish. A quick march may save you a trouncing. This is beyond all bearing, screamed out the young roister with an overwhelming vehemence. My name shall never be stolen from me, and assumed by a common cheat with impunity; neither shall my person be confounded with that of a freebooter. There are those in this town who can identify me; they are forthcoming, and shall expose the fallacy by which you are prejudiced against me. With this assurance he withdrew, attended by his servant, and Moralez kept possession of the field. The adventure had even the effect of determining Jerome de Moyadas to fix the wedding for the very time being. Accordingly he went his way, for the purpose of giving the necessary orders for the celebration.

Though my colleague in knavery was well enough pleased to see Florence's father in a humor so pat for our purposes, he was not without certain scruples of conscience about our safety. It was to be feared lest the probable proceedings of Pedro might be followed up by awkward consequences; so that he waited impatiently for my arrival, to make me acquainted with what had occurred. I found him over head and ears in a brown study. What is the matter, my friend? said I; seemingly there is something upon your mind. Indeed there is, and something that will be minded, answered he. At the same time he let me into the affair. Now you may judge, added he after a pause, whether we have not some food for reflection. It is your ill star, rash contriver, which has thrown us into this perplexity. The

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idea, it must be confessed, was full of fire and ingenuity; had it answered in the application, your renown would have been emblazoned in the chronicles of our fraternity; but according to present appearances, the run of luck is against us, and my counsels incline to a prudent avoidance of all explanations, by quietly sneaking off with the market-penny we have made of the silly old fellow's credulity.

Master Moralez, replied I to this desponding speech, you give way to difficulties with more haste than good speed. Such pusillanimity does but little honor to Don Matthias de Cordel, and the other gallant blades with whom you were affiliated at Toledo. After serving a campaign under such experienced generals, it is not soldierly to shrink from the perils of the field. For my part, I am resolved to fight the battles of these heroes over again, or, in more vulgar phrase, to prove myself a chip from the old blocks. The precipice which makes your head turn giddy only stiffens my sinews to surmount the toils of the way, and push forward to the end of our career. If you arrive at your journey's end in a whole skin, said my companion, I will myself be your biographer, and set your fame far above all the parallels of Plutarch.

Just as Moralez was finishing this learned allusion, Jerome de Moyadas came in. You shall be my son-in-law this very evening, said he. Your servant must have given you an account of what has just passed. What say you to the impudence of the

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scoundrel who wanted to make me believe that he was the son of my brother's correspondent? Honored sir, answered I, with a melancholy air, and in a tone of voice the most insinuating that ever cajoled the easy faith of a dotard, I feel within me that it is not in my nature to carry on an imposition without betraying it in my countenance. It now becomes necessary to make you a sincere confession. I am not the son of Juan Velez de la Membrilla. What is it you tell me? interrupted the old man, out of breath with surprise, and out of his wits with apprehension. So, then, you are not the young man to whom my brother . . . For pity's sake, sir, interrupted I in my turn, condescend to give me a hearing patiently to the end of my story. For these eight days have I doted to distraction on your daughter; and this dotage, this distraction, has riveted me to Merida. Yesterday, after having rescued you from your danger, I was making up my mind to ask her of you in marriage; but you gave a check to my passion, and put a tie upon my tongue, by the intelligence that she was destined for another. You told me that your brother, on his death-bed, enjoined you to give her to Pedro de la Membrilla; that your word was pledged, and that you were the sworn vassal and bondman of your veracity. These circumstances, it must be owned, were overwhelming in the extreme; and my romantic passion, at the last gasp of its despair, gained breath by the stratagem with which the god of love inspired me. I must at the same time declare, that a trick is at the

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best but a mean thing, and, however sanctified by the motive, my conscience recoiled at the delusion. Yet I could not but think that my pardon would be granted on the discovery, when it should come out that I was an Italian prince, travelling through this country as a private gentleman. My father reigns supreme over a nest of inaccessible valleys, lying between Switzerland, the Milanese, and Savoy. It could not but occur to me that you would be agreeably surprised when I should unfold to you my birth, and having married Florence under my fictitious character, should announce to her the rank she had attained, with all the rapture of an enamoured husband, and all the stage effect of a hero in tragedy or romance. But heaven, pursued I, with a hypocritical softening down of my accents, has visited my sins by cutting me off from such a perennial stream of joy. Pedro de la Membrilla was introduced upon the scene; he must have his name back again, whatever the restitution may cost me. Your promise binds you hand and foot to fix upon him for your son-in-law; it is your duty to give him the preference, without taking my rank and station into the account; without mercy on the forlorn condition to which you are going to reduce me. To be sure, it might be said — but then I should say it, who ought not to say it — that your brother had only the authority of an uncle over your daughter, that you are her father, and that there is more right and reason in discharging an actual debt of gratitude towards your preserver, than in being mealy-mouthed about a

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verbal promise, which would press but lightly on the conscience of the most scrupulous casuist.

Yes, without doubt, that argument is indisputable, exclaimed Jerome de Moyadas; and on that ground there can no longer be any question between you and Pedro de la Membrilla. If my brother Austin were still living, he would not think it bad morality to give the preference to a man who has saved my life, nor a bad speculation to close the bargain with a prince who has not disdained to court our alliance. It were an absolute suicide on the part of all my opening prospects, the frantic desperation of an acknowledged incurable, not to dispose of my daughter so illustriously, not to solicit your highness's acceptance of her hand. And yet, sir, resumed I, these things are not to be determined without due deliberation; look at your own interests and safety with a microscopic eye; for though the illustrious channel through which my blood has flowed for ages . . . You are scarcely serious, interrupted he, in supposing that I can hesitate for a moment. No, may it please your highness; it is my most humble and earnest request that you will deign, on this very evening, to honor the happy Florence with your hand. Well, then, said I, be it so; go yourself and be the bearer of the unlooked-for tidings; announce to her the brilliant career of her exalted destiny.

While the good citizen was putting his best foot foremost, to instil into his daughter that she had made the conquest of a prince, Moralez, who had

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taken in the whole conversation with greedy ear, threw himself upon his knees before me, and did homage in these bantering terms: Most potent, grave, and august Italian prince, son of a sovereign supreme over a nest of inaccessible valleys, lying between Switzerland, the Milanese, and Savoy, permit me to humble myself at your highness's feet, in humble acknowledgment of the ecstasy into which you have thrown me. By the honor of a swindler, you are one of the wonders of our world. I always thought myself the first man in the line; but in good truth I doff my bonnet before you, whose genius seems to supersede the lessons of experience. Then you are no longer uneasy about the result, said I to my colleague in iniquity. O! as to that, not in the least, answered he. I no longer care a fig for Master Pedro; let him come as soon as he pleases, we are a match for him. Here we are, then, Moralez and myself, safe seated on the saddle, and rising in our stirrups. We even went so far as to begin settling the course we should pursue with the fortune, on which we reckoned so securely, that if it had already been in our pockets, we could not have chuckled more triumphantly over the proverb of "a bird in the hand." Yet we were not in actual possession, which is more than legal right; and the sequel of the adventure proved to us, that many things fall out between the cup and the lip.

We very soon saw the young man of Calatrava returning. He was accompanied by two citizens and by an alguazil, whose dignity was as much supported

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by his whiskers, and by the lowering overcast of his swarthy aspect, as by the weight of his official character. Florence's father was of the party. Signor de Moyadas, said Pedro to him, here are three honest people come to answer for me; they are acquainted with my person, and can tell you who I am. Yes, undoubtedly, exclaimed the alguazil, I can depose to the fact. I certify to all those whom it may concern, that you are known to me; your name is Pedro, and you are the only son of Juan Valez de la Membrilla: whosoever dares to maintain the contrary is an impostor. I believe you implicitly, master alguazil, said the good creature Jerome de Moyadas, rather dryly. Your evidence is gospel to me, as well as that of these fair and honest tradesmen you have brought with you. I am fully satisfied that the young gentleman on whose behalf you come is the only son of my brother's correspondent. But what is that to me? I am no longer in the humor to give him my daughter; so there is an end of that.

O! then it is quite another matter, said the alguazil. I only come to your house for the purpose of assuring you that this young man is no impostor. You have the authority of a parent over your child, and no one has any right to dictate to you how you are to marry her, and whether you will or no. Neither do I on my part, interrupted Pedro, pretend to lay any force on the inclinations of Signor de Moyadas; but he will perhaps allow me to ask him why he has so suddenly changed his resolution.

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Has he any reason to be dissatisfied with me? Alas! let me at least understand, that in losing the sweet hope of becoming his son-in-law, my promised bliss has not been wrested from me by any misconduct of my own. I have no complaint to make of you, answered the old man; nay, I will even tell you more; it is with sincere sorrow that I find myself under the necessity of breaking my word with you, and I heartily beseech you to forgive me for having done so. I am persuaded that you are too generous to bear me any ill-will for having thrown the balance into the scale of a rival, who has saved my life. You see him here, pursued he, introducing my noble self; this is the illustrious personage who threw round me the shield of his protection in my great peril: and, the better still to apologize for my seemingly harsh treatment of yourself, you are to know that he is an Italian prince.

At these last words, Pedro was dumfounded, and looked as if he could not help it. The two tradesmen opened their eyes as wide as they could stare, with surprise at finding themselves for the first time in princely society. But the alguazil, in the habit of looking at things with the cross eye of suspicion, divined most perspicuously that this marvellous adventure must be a complete humbug; and the verification of the prophecy was calculated to put money into the pocket of the prophet. He therefore conned over my countenance with a very inquisitive regard; but as my features, which were new to justice, threw him out most cruelly from

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hunting down the game he was in chase of, he had no alternative but to try his luck on my companion. Unfortunately for my highness of the inaccessible valleys, he knew again the hang-dog features of Moralez; and recollecting to have seen him within the purlieus of a jail, Ay, ay! exclaimed he, this is one of my established customers. This gentleman is a particular acquaintance of mine, and you may take his character from me for one of the rankest rascals within the kingdoms and principalities of Spain. Softly! look before you leap, most adventurous alguazil, said Jerome de Moyadas; this lad, of whom you draw so unfavorable a picture, is in the travelling retinue of a prince. So much the better, retorted the alguazil; a man would not desire clearer evidence on which to bring in his verdict. If we can but hang the servant, we shall soon send the master to the devil. The case is as undeniable as a feed counsel's plea; these pleasant sparks are a couple of fortune-hunters, who have laid their heads together to take you in. I am an old hound upon this scent; so that, by way of proof presumptive that these merry vagabonds are within the contemplation of the law in that case provided, I shall lodge them where they will be well taken care of. They will have plenty of time for meditation under the chastising philosophy of a turnkey; or should confinement fail to mend their morals, we have a sort of tangible discipline, which insinuates reformation by the inlet of a smarting hide. Stop there, and bethink you in good time, master officer,

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rejoined the old gentleman: we must not draw the cord tighter than it will bear. You never make any bones, you hangers-on of the law, about hurting the feelings of better men than yourselves. May not this servant be a common cheat, without his master being a swindler? Princes are persons of honor as a matter of course; yet the retainers to a court are inordinate rascals; it requires no conjurer to find that out. Are you playing into the hands of your deluders, with your princes? interrupted the alguazil. This new manufacturer of false pretences is a proficient, take my word for it; but I shall quench his zeal in the service, and gravel the ingenuity of his partner, with a *whereas* and a commitment in due form. The scouts of justice are all round the door, who will worry their game every inch of the chase, if they do not suffer themselves to be taken quietly on their form. So come along, may it please your serene highness; let us proceed to our destination.

This upshot of the business was a death-blow to me, as well as to Moralez; and our confusion did but infuse doubts into the mind of Jerome de Moyadas, or rather burned, sunk, and destroyed us in his esteem. He began rather to think, not without reason, that we had some little design to impose on his credulity. Nevertheless he acted on this occasion in the spirit of a man of honor and a gentleman. My good friend and protector, said he to the alguazil, your conjectures may be without foundation; on the other hand, they may turn out to have too much truth in them. Whichever of these alter-

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natives may be the fact, let us not look too curiously into their characters. They are both young, and have time enough for amendment if they want it; let them go their ways, and withdraw whithersoever it may best please them. Make no opposition, I beseech you, to their safe egress; it is a favor which you may consider as done to me, and my motive for asking it is to acquit myself of my debt to them. If my heart was not too soft for my profession, answered the alguazil, I should lodge these pretty gentlemen in limbo, in defiance of all your pleadings in their favor; but your eloquence and my susceptibility have relaxed the stern demeanor of justice for this evening. Let them, however, leave town on the spur of the occasion; for if I come across them to-morrow, and there is any faith in an alguazil, they shall see such sport as will be no sport to them.

When it was signified to Moralez and me, culprits as we were, that we were to be let off scot free, we polished up the brass upon our foreheads a little. It was time now to bounce and swagger, and to maintain that we were men of undeniable respectability; but the alguazil looked askew at us, and muttered that least said was soonest mended. I do not know how, but those gentry have a strange knack of curbing our genius; they are complete lords of the ascendant. Florence and her dowry, therefore, were lost to Pedro de la Membrilla by a turn of the dice, and we may conclude that he was received as the son-in-law of Jerome de Moyadas. I took to my heels with my companion. We blundered

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on the road to Truxillo, with the consolation at our hearts of having at least pocketed a hundred pistoles by our frolic. An hour before nightfall we passed through a little village, with the intention of putting up for the evening at the next stage. An inn of very tolerable appearance for the place attracted our notice. The landlord and landlady were sitting at the door, on a long bench such as usually graces a pot-house porch. Our host, a tall man, withered, and with one foot in the grave, was tinkling on a cracked guitar to the unbounded emolument of his wife, whose faculties seemed to hang in rapture on the performance. Gentlemen, cried out the intrepid tavern-keeper, when he found that we were not upon the halt, you will do well to stop here; you may fare worse farther off. There is a devil of a three leagues to the nearest village, and you will find nothing to make you amends for what you leave behind; you may assure yourselves of that. Take a word of advice, know when you are well used; I will treat you with the fat of the land, and charge you at the lowest rate. There was no resisting such a plea. We came up to our courteous entertainers, paid them the compliments of course, and sitting down by their side, the conversation was supported by all four on the indifferent topics of the day. Our host announced himself as an officer of the Holy Brotherhood, and his rib was a fat, laughing squab of a woman, with outward good nature, but with an eye to make the most of her commodities.

Our discourse was broken in upon by the arrival

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of from twelve to fifteen riders, some mounted on mules, others on horseback, followed by about thirty sumpter-mules laden with packages. Ah! what a princely retinue! exclaimed the landlord at the sight of so much company: where can I put them all? In an instant the village was crammed full of men and beasts. As luck would have it, there was near the inn an immense barn, where the sumpter-mules and their packages were secured; the saddle-mules and horses were taken care of in other places. As for their masters, they thought less about bespeaking beds than about calling for the bill of fare, and ordering a good supper. The host and hostess, with a servant girl whom they kept, were all upon the alert to make things agreeable. They laid a heavy hand upon all the fowls in the poultry-yard. These precious roasts, with some undisguised rabbits, cats in the masquerade of a fricassee, and a deluging tureen of soup, stinking of cabbage and greasy with mutton fat, were enough to have given a sickener to the inveterate stomachs of a regiment.

As for Moralez and myself, we cast a scrutinizing eye on these troopers; nor were they behindhand in passing their secret judgments upon us. At last we came together in conversation, and it was proposed on our part, if they had no objection, that we should all sup together. They assured us that they should be extremely happy in our company. Here we are, then, all seated round the table. There was one among them who seemed to take the lead; and for whom the rest, though in the main they were on the

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most intimate terms with him, thought it necessary on some occasions to testify their deference. In case of a dispute, this high gentleman assumed the umpire; he talked in a tone above the common pitch, going so far sometimes as to contradict in no very courtly phrase the sentiments of others, who, far from giving him back his own, were ready to swear to his assertions and crouch under his rebuke. By accident the discourse turned on Andalusia. Moralez happening to launch out into the praise of Seville, the man about whom I have been talking said to him, My good fellow-traveller, you are ringing the chimes on the city which gave birth to me; at least I am a native of the neighborhood, since the little town of Mayrena is answerable for my appearance in the world. I have the same story to tell you, answered my companion. I am also of Mayrena; and it is scarcely possible but that our families should be acquainted. Whose son are you? An honest notary's, replied the stranger, by name Martin Moralez. As fate will have it, exclaimed my comrade with emotion, the adventure is very remarkable! You are, then, my eldest brother, Manuel Moralez. Exactly so, said the other; and if my senses do not deceive me, you your very self are my little brother Lewis, whom I left in the cradle when I turned my back upon my father's house? You are right in your conjectures, answered my honest colleague. At this discovery, they both got up from table, and almost hugged the breath out of each other's bodies. At last Signor Manuel said to the company, Gen-

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tlemen, this circumstance is altogether marvellous. By mere chance, I have met with a brother, and have been challenged by him, whom I have not seen for more than twenty years: allow me to introduce him. At once all the travellers, who had risen from their seats out of curiosity and good manners, paid their compliments to the younger Moralez, and made him run the gantlet through their salutations. When these were over, the party returned to the table; nor did they think any more of an adjournment. Bed-time never entered into their heads. The two brothers sat next to one another, and talked in a whisper about their family affairs; the other guests plied the bottle, and made merry in a louder key.

Lewis had a long conference with Manuel, and afterwards taking me aside, said to me, All these troopers belong to the household of the Count de Montanos, whom the king has very lately appointed to the vice-regal government of Majorca. They are convoying the equipage of the viceroy to Alicant, where they are to embark. My brother, who has risen to be steward to that nobleman, proposes to take me along with him; and on the difficulty I started about leaving you, he told me that if you would be of the party, he would procure you a good berth. My dear friend, pursued he, I advise you not to stand out against this proposal. Let us take flight together for the island of Majorca. If we find our quarters pleasant, we will fix there; and if they are otherwise, we have nothing to do but to return into Spain.

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I accepted the proposal with the best grace possible. What a reënforcement, in the person of young Moralez and myself, to the household of the count! We took our departure in a body from the inn, before daybreak. We got to the city of Alicant by long stages, and there I bought a guitar, and arranged my dress in a manner suited to my new destination, before we embarked. Nothing ran in my head but the island of Majorca; and Lewis Moralez was a new man as well as myself. It should seem as though we had bid farewell to the rogueries of this wicked world. Yet, not to play the liar in the ear of so rigorous a confessor as my own conscience, we had a mind not to pass for villains incarnate, now that we had got into company that had some pretensions to decency: and that was the sum total of our honesty. The natural bent of our genius remained much the same; we were still men of business, but just now keeping a vacation. In short, we went on board gallantly and gayly in this lucid interval of innocence, and had no idea but of landing at Majorca under the especial care of Neptune and Æolus. Hardly, however, had we cleared the gulf of Alicant, when a sudden and violent storm arose, enough to have frightened better men. Now is my opportunity, or never, to speak of moving accidents by flood; to set the atmosphere on fire, and give a louder explosion to the thunder-cloud; to compare the whistling of the winds to the factions of a populace, and the rolling of the waves to the shock of conflicting hosts; with other such old-

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fashioned phraseologies as have been heirlooms of Parnassus from time immemorial. But it is useless to be poetical without invention. Suffice it therefore to say, in slang metaphor, that the storm was a devil of a storm, and obliged us to stand in for the point of Cabrera. This is a desert island, with a small fort, at that time garrisoned by an officer and five or six soldiers. Our reception was hospitable and cordial.

As it was necessary for us to stay there some days, for the purpose of refitting our sails and rigging, we devised various kinds of amusements to keep off the foul fiend melancholy. Every one did as seemed good in his own eyes: some played at cards, others diverted themselves in other ways; but as for me, I went about exploring the island, with such of our gentry as had either a curiosity or a taste for the picturesque. We were frequently obliged to clamber from rock to rock; for the face of the country is rugged, and the soil scanty, presenting a scene difficult of access, but interesting from its wildness. One day, while we were speculating on these dry and barren prospects, and extracting a moral from the vagaries of nature, who can swell into the fruitful mother and the copious nurse, or shrink into the lean and loathsome skeleton, as she pleases, our sense was all at once regaled with a most delicious fragrance. We turned as with a common impulse towards the east, whence the scented gale seemed to come. To our utter astonishment, we discovered among the rocks a

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green plat of considerable dimensions, gay with honeysuckles more luxuriant and more odorous than even those which thrive so greatly in the climate of Andalusia. We were not sorry to approach nearer these delicious shrubs, which were wasting their sweetness in such unchecked profusion, when it turned out that they lined the entrance of a very deep cavern. The opening was wide, and the recess in consequence partially illuminated. We were determined to explore; and descended by some stone steps overgrown with flowers on each side, so that it was difficult to say whether the approach was formed by art or nature. When we had got down, we saw several little streams winding over a sand, the yellow lustre of which outrivalled gold. These drew their sources from the continual distillations of the rock within, and lost themselves again in the hollows of the ground. The water looked so clear, that we were tempted to drink of it; and such was its freshness, that we made a party to return the next day, with some bottles of generous wine, which we were persuaded would acquire new zest from the retreat where they were to be quaffed.

It was not without regret that we left so agreeable a place; nor did we omit, on our return to the fort, boasting among our comrades of so interesting a discovery. The commander of the fortress, however, with the warmest professions of friendship, warned us against going any more to the cavern, with which we were so much delighted. And why so? said I; is there anything to be afraid of? Most

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undoubtedly, answered he. The corsairs of Algiers and Tripoli sometimes land upon this island, for the purpose of watering at that spring. One day they surprised two soldiers of my garrison there, whom they carried into slavery. It was in vain that the officer assumed a tone of kind dissuasion: nothing could prevent us from going. We fancied that he meant to play upon our fears; and the day following I returned to the cavern with three adventurous blades of our establishment. We were even foolhardy enough to leave our firearms behind as a sort of bravado. Young Moralez declined being of the party: the fort and the gaming-table had more charms for him, as well as for his brother.

We went down to the bottom of the cave as on the preceding day, and set some bottles of the wine we had brought with us to cool in the rivulets. While we were enjoying them in all the luxury of elegant conviviality, our wits set in motion by the novelty of the scene, and the echo reverberating to the music of our guitars, we espied at the mouth of the cavern several abominable faces overgrown with whiskers; neither did their turbans and Turkish dresses render them a whit more amiable in our conceits. We nevertheless took it into our heads that it was a frolic of our own party, set on by the commanding officer of the fort, and that they had disguised themselves for the purpose of playing us a trick. With this impression on our minds, we set up a horse-laugh, and allowed a quiet entrance to about ten, without thinking of making any resist-

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ance. In a few moments our eyes were opened to that fatal error, and we were convinced, in sober sadness, that it was a corsair at the head of his crew, come to carry us away. Surrender, you Christian dogs, cried he, in most outlandish Castilian, or prepare for instant death. At the same time the men who accompanied him levelled their pieces at us, and our ribs would have been well lined with the contents, if we had resisted in the least. Slavery seemed the better alternative than death, so that we delivered our swords to the pirate. He ordered us to be handcuffed and carried on board his vessel, which was moored not far off; then, setting sail, he steered with a fair wind towards Algiers.

Thus were we punished for having neglected the warning given us by the officer of the garrison. The first thing the corsair did was to put his hand into our pockets and make free with our money. No bad windfall for him! The two hundred pistoles from the greenhorns at Placentia; the hundred which Moralez had received from Jerome de Moyadas, and which, as ill luck would have it, were in my custody; all this was swept away without a single qualm of conscience. My companions, too, had their purses well lined; and it was all fish that came to the net. The pirate seemed to chuckle at so successful a drag; and the scoundrel, not contented with chousing us of our cash, insulted us with his infernal Moorish witticisms: but the edge of his satire was not half so keen as the dire necessity

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which made us the subject of it. After a thousand clumsy sarcasms, he called for the bottles which we had set to cool in the fountain; those irreligious Mahometans not having scrupled to load their consciences with the conveyance of the unholy fermentation. The master and his man pledged one another in many a Christian bumper, and drank to our better acquaintance with a most provoking mockery.

While this farce was acting, my comrades wore a hanging look, which testified how pleasantly their thoughts were employed. They were so much the more out of conceit with their captivity, as they thought they had drawn a prize in the lottery of human life. The island of Majorca, with all its luxuries and delights, was a melancholy contrast with their present situation. For my part, I had the good sense to take things as I found them. Less put out of my way by my misfortune than the rest, I joined in conversation with this transmarine joker, and showed him that wit was the common language of Africa and of Europe. He was pleased with my accommodating spirit. Young man, said he, instead of groaning and sighing, you do well to arm yourself with patience, and to fall in with the current of your destiny. Play us a little air, continued he, observing that I had a guitar by my side; let us have a specimen of your skill. I complied with his command, as soon as my arms were loosened from their confinement, and began to thrum away in a style that drew down the applauses of my

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discerning audience. It is true that I had been taught by the best master in Madrid, and that I played very tolerably for an amateur upon that instrument. A song was then called for, and my voice gave equal satisfaction. All the Turks on board testified by gestures of admiration the delight with which my performance inspired them; from which circumstance it was but modest to conclude, that vocal music had made no very extraordinary progress in their part of the world. The pirate whispered in my ear, that my slavery should be no disadvantage to me; and that with my talents I might reckon upon an employment, by which my lot would be rendered not only supportable, but happy.

I felt somewhat encouraged by these assurances; but, flattering as they were, I was not without my uneasiness as to the employment, which the corsair held out as a nameless but invaluable boon. When we arrived in the port of Algiers, a great number of persons were collected to receive us; and we had not yet disembarked, when they uttered a thousand shouts of joy. Add to this, that the air reëchoed with a confused sound of trumpets, of Moorish flutes, and of other instruments, the fashion of that country, forming a symphony of deafening clangor, but very doubtful harmony. The occasion of these rejoicings proceeded from a false report, which had been current about the town. It had been the general talk that the renegado Mahomet — meaning our amiable pirate — had lost his life in the attack of a

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large Genoese vessel; so that all his friends, informed of his return, were eager to hail him with these thundering demonstrations of attachment.

We had no sooner set foot on shore, than my companions and myself were conducted to the palace of the bashaw Soliman, where a Christian secretary, questioning us individually one after another, inquired into our names, our ages, our country, our religion, and our qualifications. Then Mahomet, presenting me to the bashaw, paid my voice more compliments than it deserved, and told him that I played on the guitar with a most ravishing expression. This was enough to influence Soliman in his choice of me for his own immediate service. I took up my abode therefore in his seraglio. The other captives were led into the public market, and sold there at the usual rate of Christian cattle. What Mahomet had foretold to me on shipboard was completely verified; my condition was exactly to my mind. I was not consigned to the stronghold of a prison, nor kept to any works of oppressive labor. My indulgent master stationed me in a particular quarter, with five or six slaves of superior rank, who were in momentary expectation of being ransomed, and were therefore favored in the distribution of our tasks. The care of watering the orange-trees and flowers in the gardens was allotted as my portion. There could not be a more agreeable or less fatiguing employment.

Soliman was a man about forty years of age, well made as to figure, tolerably accomplished as to his

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mind, and as much of a lady's man as could be expected from a Turk. His favorite was a Cashmirian, whose wit and beauty had acquired an absolute dominion over his affections. He loved her even to idolatry. Not a day but he paid his court to her by some elegant entertainment; at one time a concert of vocal and instrumental music, at another, a dramatic performance after the fashion of the Turks, which fashion implies a loose sort of comedy, where moral and modesty enter about as much into the contemplation of the contriver, as do Aristotle and his unities. The favorite, whose name was Farrukhnaz, was passionately enamoured of these exhibitions; she sometimes even got up among her own women some Arabian melodrames to be performed before her admirer. She took some of the parts herself, and charmed the spectators by the abundant grace and vivacity of her action. One day, when I was among the musicians at one of these representations, Soliman ordered me to play on the guitar, and to sing a solo between the acts of the piece. I had the good fortune to give satisfaction, and was received with applause. The favorite herself, if my vanity did not mislead me, cast glances towards me of no unfavorable interpretation.

On the next day, as I was watering the orange-trees in the gardens, there passed close by me a eunuch, who, without stopping or saying a word, threw down a note at my feet. I picked it up with an emotion strangely compounded of pleasure and alarm. I crouched upon the ground, for fear of be-

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ing observed from the windows of the seraglio; and, concealing myself behind the boxes in which the orange-trees were planted, opened this unexpected enclosure. There I found a diamond of very considerable value, and these words, in genuine Castilian: "Young Christian, return thanks to heaven for your captivity. Love and fortune will render it the harbinger of your bliss: love, if you are alive to the attractions of a fine person, and fortune, if you have the hardihood to confront danger in every direction."

I could not for a moment doubt that the letter was written by the favorite sultana: the style and the diamond were more than presumptive evidence against her. Besides that nature did not cast me in the mould of a coward, the vanity of keeping up a good understanding with the mistress of a scoundrelly Mahometan in office, and, more than all the temptations of vanity or inclination, the hope of cajoling her out of four times as much as the curmudgeon her master would demand for my ransom, put me into conceit with the intention of trying my luck at a venture, whatever risk might be incurred in the experiment. I went on with my gardening, but always harping on the means of getting into the apartment of Farrukhnaz, or rather waiting till she opened a door of communication; for I was clearly of opinion that she would not stop upon the threshold, but meet me half way in the career of love and danger. My conjecture was not altogether without foundation. The same eunuch who had led me into this amorous reverie passed the same way an hour af-

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terwards, and said to me, Christian, have you communed with your own determinations, and will you win a fair lady by abjuring a faint heart? I answered in the affirmative. Well then, rejoined he, heaven sprinkle its dew upon your resolutions! You shall see me betimes to-morrow morning. With this comfortable assurance, he withdrew. The following day, I actually saw him make his appearance about eight o'clock in the morning. He made a signal for me to go along with him: I obeyed the summons; and he conducted me into a hall where was a large wrapper of canvas, which he and another eunuch had just brought thither, with the design of carrying it to the sultana's apartment, for the purpose of furnishing a scene for an Arabian pantomime, in preparation for the amusement of the bashaw.

The two eunuchs unrolled the cloth, and laid me at my length on the proscenium; then, at the risk of turning the farce into a tragedy by stifling me, they rolled it up again, with its palpitating contents. In the next place, taking hold of it at each end, they conveyed me with impunity by this device into the chamber devoted to the repose of the beautiful Cashmirian. She was alone with an old slave devoted to her wishes. They helped each other to unroll their precious bale of goods; and Farrukhnaz, at the sight of her consignment, set up such an alarm of delight, as exhibited the woman of the East, without forgetting her prurient propensities. With all my natural bias towards adventure, I could not recognize myself

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as at once transported into the private apartment of the women, without something like an inauspicious damp upon my joy. The lady was aware of my feelings, and anxious to dissipate the unpleasant part of them. Young man, said she, you have nothing to fear. Soliman is just gone to his country-house: he is safely lodged for the day; so that we shall be able to entertain one another here at our ease.

Hints like these rallied my scattered spirits, and gave a cast to my countenance which confirmed the speculation of the favorite. You have won my heart, pursued she, and it is in my contemplation to soften the severity of your bondage. You seem to be worthy of the sentiments which I have conceived for you. Though disguised under the garb of a slave, your air is noble, and your physiognomy of a character to recommend you to the good graces of a lady. Such an exterior must belong to one above the common. Unbosom yourself to me in confidence; tell me who you are. I know that captives of superior condition and family disguise their real circumstances, to be redeemed at a lower rate: but you have no inducement to practise such a deception on me; and it would even be a precaution revolting to my designs in your favor, since I here pledge myself for your liberty. Deal with sincerity therefore, and own to me at once that you are a youth of illustrious rank. In good earnest then, madam, answered I, it would ill become me to repay your generous partiality with dissimulation. You are absolutely bent upon it, that I should intrust you with the secret of

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my quality, and commands like yours are not to be questioned or resisted. I am the son of a Spanish grandee. And so it might actually have been, for anything that I know to the contrary; at all events, the sultana gave me credit for it, so that with considerable self-congratulation at having fixed her regard on a gentleman of some little figure in the world, she assured me that it only depended on herself whether or no we should meet pretty often in private. In fact, we were no niggards of our mutual good will at the very first approaches. I never met with a woman who was more what a man wishes her to be. She was, besides, an expert linguist, above all in Castilian, which she spoke with fluency and purity. When she conceived it to be time for us to part, I got by her order into a large osier basket, with an embroidered silk covering of her own manufacture; then the two slaves who had brought me in were called, to carry me out as a present from the favorite to her deluded lord; for under this pretence it is easy to screen any amorous exports from the inspection of the officers intrusted with the superintendence of the women.

As for Farrukhnaz and myself, we were not slack in other devices to bring us together; and that lovely captive inspired me by degrees with as much love as she herself entertained for me. Our good understanding was kept a profound secret for full two months, notwithstanding the extreme difficulty in a seraglio of veiling the mysteries of love for any length of time from those uninitiated, whose eyes

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are jaundiced by their own disqualification. Neither was the discovery made at last by the means of envious spies. An unlucky chance disconcerted all our little arrangements, and the features of my fortune were at once aggravated into a frown. One day, when I had been introduced into the presence of the sultana, in the body of an artificial dragon, invented as a machine for a spectacle, while we were parleying most amicably together, Soliman, to whom we had given credit for having gone out of town, made his unwelcome appearance. He entered so abruptly into his favorite's apartment, as scarcely to leave time for the old slave to give us notice of his approach. Still less was there any opportunity to conceal me. Thus therefore, with all my enormities on my head, was I the first object which presented itself to the astonished eyes of the bashaw.

He seemed considerably startled at the sight; and his countenance flashed with indignation on the instant. I considered myself as a wretch, just hovering on the brink of the grave; and death seemed arrayed in all the paraphernalia of torture. As for Farrukhnaz, it was very evident, in good truth, that she was miserably frightened; but instead of owning her crime and imploring pardon, she said to Soliman, My lord, before you pronounce my sentence, be pleased to hear my defence. Appearances, doubtless, condemn me; and it must strike you that I have committed an act of treason worthy the most dreadful punishments. It is true, I have brought this young captive hither; it is true that I have

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introduced him into my apartment, with just such artifices as I should have used if I had entertained a violent passion for him. And yet, I call our great prophet to witness, in spite of these seeming irregularities, I am not faithless to you. It was my wish to converse with this Christian slave, for the purpose of disengaging him from his own sect, and proselyting him to that of the true believers. But I have found in him a principle of resistance for which I was not well prepared. I have, however, conquered his prejudices; and he came to give me an assurance that he would embrace Mahometanism.

I do not mean to deny that it was an act of duty to have contradicted the favorite flatly, without paying the least attention to the dangerous predicament in which I stood; but my spirits were taken by surprise; the beloved partner of my imprudence was hovering on the brink of perdition; and my own fate was involved with hers. How could I do otherwise than give a silent and perturbed assent to her impious fiction? My tongue, indeed, refused to ratify it; but the bashaw, persuaded by my acquiescence that his mistress had told him the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, suffered his angry spirit to be tranquillized. Madam, answered he, I am willing to believe that you have committed no infidelity towards me; and that the desire of doing a thing agreeable to the prophet has been the means of leading you on to risk so hazardous and delicate a proceeding. I forgive, therefore, your imprudence, on condition that this captive assumes the turban on

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the spot. He sent immediately for a priest * to initiate me. My dress was changed with all due ceremony into the Turkish. They did just what they pleased with me; nor had I the courage to object: or, to do myself more justice, I knew not what was becoming of me, in so dreadful a disorder of all my faculties and feelings. There are other good Christians in the world, who have been guilty of apostatizing on less imminent emergencies!

After the ceremony, I took my leave of the seraglio, to go and possess myself, under the name of Sidy Hali, of an inferior office which Soliman had given me. I never saw the sultana more; but a eunuch of hers came one day to look after me. He brought with him, as a present from his mistress, jewels to a very considerable amount, accompanied with a letter, in which the lady assured me she should never forget my generous compliance, in turning Mahometan to save her life. In point of fact, besides these rich gifts, lavished upon me by Farrakhnaz, I obtained through her interest a more considerable employment than my first, and in the course of six or seven years became one of the richest renegadoes in the town of Algiers.

You must be perfectly aware, that if I assisted at the prayers put up by the Mussulmans in their mosques, or fulfilled the other observances of their religion, it was all a mere copy of my countenance.

* These wandering priests are at present known in Africa by the name of Marabut. The first gymnosophists of Ethiopia most probably were nothing more.—TRANSLATOR.

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My inclination was always uniform and determined as to returning before my death into the bosom of our holy church; and with this view I looked forward to withdrawing some time or other into Spain or Italy with the riches I should have accumulated. But there seemed no reason whatever against enjoying life in the interval. I was established in a magnificent mansion, with gardens of extent and beauty, a numerous train of slaves, and a well-appointed equipage of pretty girls in my seraglio. Though the Mahometans are forbidden the use of wine in that country, they are not backward for the most part in their stolen libations. As for me, my orgies were without either a mask or a blush, after the manner of my brother renegadoes. I remember in particular two of my bottle companions, with whom I often drank down the night before we rose from table. One was a Jew, and the other an Arabian. I took them to be good sort of people; and, with that impression, lived in unconstrained familiarity with them. One evening I invited them to sup at my house. On that very day a dog of mine died — it was a pet; we performed our pious ablutions on his lifeless clay, and buried him with all the solemn obsequies attendant on a Mahometan funeral. This act of ours was not designed to turn the religion we outwardly professed into ridicule; it was only to furnish ourselves with amusement, and give loose to a ludicrous whim which struck us in the moment of jollity, that of paying the last offices of humanity to my dog.

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This action was, however, very near laying me by the heels. On the following day there came a fellow to my house, saying, Master Sidy Hali, it is no laughing matter that induces me to pay you this visit. My employer, the cadi, wants to have a word in your ear; be so good, if you please, as just to step to his office, without loss of time. An Arabian merchant, who supped with you last night, has laid an information respecting a certain act of irreverence perpetrated by you, on occasion of a dog which you buried. It is on that charge that I summon you to appear this day before the judge; and, in case of failure, you are hereby warned that you will be the subject of a criminal prosecution. Away went he, leaving me to digest his discourse; but the citation stuck in my throat, and took away my appetite. The Arabian had no reason whatever to set his face against me; and I could not comprehend the meaning of the dog's trick the scoundrel had played me. The circumstance, at all events, demanded my prompt attention. I knew the cadi's character — a saint on the outside, but a sinner in his heart. Away went I therefore to wait on this judge, but not with empty pockets. He sent for me into his private room, and began upon me in all the vehemence of pious indignation: You are a fellow rejected out of paradise! a blasphemer of our holy law! a man loathsome and abominable to look upon! You have performed the funeral service of a Mussulman over a dog. What an act of sacrilege! Is it thus, then, that you reverence our most holy ceremonies? Have

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you only turned Mahometan to laugh at our devotions and our rites? My honored master, answered I, the Arabian who has told you such a cock and bull story is a wolf in sheep's clothing; and, more than that, he is even an accomplice in my crime, if it is one, to grant such rest as to peace-parted souls to a faithful household servant, to an animal with more good qualities than half the two-legged Mahometans out of Christendom. His attachment, besides, to people of merit and consideration in the world was at once moral and sensible; and at his death he left several little tokens of remembrance to his friends. By his last will and testament, he bequeathed his effects in the manner therein mentioned, and did me the honor to name me for his executor. This old crony came in for twenty crowns, that for thirty, and another for a cool hundred; but your worship is interested deeply in this instrument, pursued I, drawing out my purse; he has left you residuary legatee, and here is the amount of the bequest. The cadi's gravity could not but relax, after the posthumous kindness of his deceased friend; and he laughed outright in the face of the mock executor. As we were alone, there was no occasion to make wry mouths at the purse, and my acquittal was pronounced in these words: Go, Master Sidy Hali; it was a very pious act of yours, to enlarge the obsequies of a dog, who had so manly a fellow-feeling for honest folks.

By this device I got out of the scrape; and if the hint did not increase my religion, it doubled my cir-

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cumspection. I was determined no longer to open either my cellar or my soul, in presence of Arabian or Jew. My bottle companion henceforward was a young gentleman from Leghorn, who had the happiness of being my slave. His name was Azarini. I was of another kidney from renegadoes in general, who impose greater hardships on their Christian slaves than do the Turks themselves. All my captives waited for the period of their ransom, without any impatient hankering after home. My behavior to them was, in truth, so gentle and fatherly, that many of them assured me they were more afraid of changing their master than anxious after their liberty; whatever magic that word may have to the ears of those who have felt what it is to be deprived of it.

One day the bashaw's corsairs came into port with considerable prizes. Their cargo amounted to more than a hundred slaves of either sex, carried off from the Spanish coast. Soliman retained but a very small number, and all the rest were sold. I happened to go to market, and bought a Spanish girl ten or twelve years old. She cried as if her heart would break, and looked the picture of despair. It seemed strange that at her age slavery should make such an impression on her. I told her, in Castilian, to combat with her terrors; and assured her that she was fallen into the hands of a master who had not put off humanity when he took up the turban. The little mourner, not initiated in the trade of grief, pursued the subject of her lamentations, without

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listening to me. Her whole soul seemed to be breathed in her sighs; she descanted on her wretched fate, and exclaimed from time to time, in softened accents, O my mother, why were we ever parted? I could bear my lot with patience, might we share it together. With these lamentations on her lips, she turned round towards a woman of from five-and-forty to fifty, standing at the distance of several paces, and waiting, with her eyes fixed to the ground, in a determined, sullen silence, till she met with a purchaser. I asked my young bargain if the lady she was looking at was her mother. Alas! she is, indeed, sir, replied the girl; for the love of God, do not let me be parted from her. Well, then, my distressed little damsel, said I, if it will give you any pleasure, there is no more to do than to settle you both in the same quarters, and then you will give over your murmuring. On the very moment I went up to the mother, with the intention of cheapening her; but no sooner did I cast my eyes on her face, than I knew again, with what emotion you may guess! the very form and pressure of Lucinda. Just heaven! said I within myself, this is my mother! Nature whispers it in my ear, and can I doubt her evidence? On her part, whether a keen resentment of her woes pointed out an enemy in every object on which she glanced, or else it might be my dress that disfigured me; . . . or else I might have grown a little older in about a dozen years since she had seen me; . . . but, however historians may account for it, she did not know me.

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But I knew her, and bought her: the pair were sent home to my house.

When they were safely lodged, I wished to surprise them with the pleasure of ascertaining who I was. Madam, said I to Lucinda, is it possible that my features should not strike you? 'Tis true, I wear whiskers and a turban: but is Raphael less your son for that? My mother thrilled through all her frame at these words, looked at me with an eager gaze, my whole self rushed into her recollection, and into each other's arms we affectionately flew. I then caressed, in moderated ecstasies, her daughter, who perhaps knew as much about having a brother as I did about having a sister. Tell the truth, said I to my mother; in all your theatrical discoveries, did you ever meet with one so truly natural and dramatic as this? My dear son, answered she in an accent of sorrow, the first sight of you after so long a separation overwhelmed me with joy; but the revulsion was only the more deeply distressing. In what condition, alas! do I again behold you? My own slavery is a thousand times less revolting to my feelings than the disgraceful habiliments . . . Heyday! By all the powers, madam, interrupted I with a hearty laugh, I am quite delighted with your newly-acquired morality: this is excellent in an actress. Well! well! as heaven is my judge, my honored mamma, you are mightily improved in your principles, if my transformation astounds your religious eyesight. So far from quarrelling with your turban, consider me rather as an

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actor, playing a Turkish character on the stage of the world. Though a conformist, I am just as much a Mussulman as when I was in Spain; nay, in the bottom of my heart, I never was a more firm believer in our Christian creed that at the present moment. When you shall become acquainted with all my hair-breadth escapes, since I have been domesticated in this country, you will not be rigorous in your censure. Love has been the cause of my apostasy, and he who worships at that shrine may be absolved from all other infidelities. I have a little of my mother in me, take my word for it. Another reason besides ought to moderate your disgust at seeing me under my present circumstances. You were expecting to experience a harsh captivity in Algiers, but you find in your protector a son, with all the tenderness and reverence befitting his relation to you, and rich enough to maintain you here in plenty and comfort, till a favorable opportunity offers of returning with safety into Spain. Admit, therefore, the force of the proverb, which says that evil itself is good for something.

My dear son, said Lucinda, since you fully intend one day to go back into your own country, and to throw off the mantle of Mahomet, my scruples are all satisfied. Thanks to heaven, continued she, I shall be able to carry back your sister Beatrice safe and sound into Castile. Yes, madam, exclaimed I, so you may. We will all three, as soon as the season may serve, go and throw ourselves into the bosom of our family: for I make no matter of doubt but

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you have still in Spain other indisputable evidences of your prolific powers. No, said my mother, I have only you two, the offspring of my body; and you are to know that Beatrice is the fruit of a marriage manufactured in as workmanlike a manner as any within the pale of the church. And pray, for what reason, replied I, might not my little sister have been just as contraband as myself? How did you ever work yourself up to the formidable resolution of marrying? I have heard you say a hundred times, in my childhood, that there was no benefit of clergy for a pretty woman who could commit such an offence as to take up with a husband. Times and seasons ebb and flow, my son, rejoined she. Men of the most resolute character may be shaken in their purposes: and do you require that a woman should be inflexible in hers? But I will now relate to you the story of my life since your departure from Madrid. She then began the following recital, which will never be obliterated from my memory. I will not withhold from you so curious a narrative.

It is nearly thirteen years, if you recollect, said my mother, since you left young Leganez. Just at that time, the Duke of Medina Celi told me that he had a mind to sup with me one evening in private. The day was fixed. I made preparations for his reception: he came, and I pleased him. He required from me the sacrifice of all his rivals, past, present, and to come. I came into his terms, in the hope of being well paid for my complaisance. There was no deficiency on that score. On the very next morning,

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I received presents from him, which were followed up by a long train of kindred attentions. I was afraid of not being able to hold in my chains a man of his exalted rank: and this apprehension was the better founded, because it was a matter of notoriety that he had escaped from the clutches of several celebrated beauties, whose chains he had worn only for the purpose of breaking. But for all that, so far from surfeiting on the relish of my kindness, his appetite grew by what it fed on. In short, I found out the secret of entertaining him, and impounding his heart, naturally roving, so that it should not go astray according to its usual volatility.

He had now been my admirer for three months, and I had every reason to flatter myself that the arrangement would be lasting, when a lady of my acquaintance and myself happened to go to an assembly, where the duchess his wife was of the party. We were invited to a concert of vocal and instrumental music. We accidentally seated ourselves too near the duchess, who took it into her head to be affronted that I should exhibit my person in a place where she was. She sent me word, by one of her women, that she should take it as a favor if I would quit the room immediately. I sent back an answer just as saucy as the message. The duchess, irritated to fury, laid her wrongs before her husband, who came to me in person, and said, Retire, Lucinda. Though noblemen of the first rank attach themselves to pretty playthings like yourself, it is highly unbecoming in you to forget your proper distance. If

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we love you better than our wives, we honor our wives more than you: whenever, therefore, your insolence shall go so far as to set yourselves up for their rivals under their very noses, you will always be mortified, and made to know your places.

Fortunately the duke held his cruel language to me in so low a tone of voice as not to have been overheard by the people about us. I withdrew in deep confusion, and cried with vexation at having incurred such an affront. At once, to crown my shame and aggravate my chastisement, the actors and actresses got hold of the story on the very same evening. To do them justice, these gentry must contrive to entertain a familiar spirit, whose business is to fly about, and whisper in the ear of one whatever falls out amiss to the other. Suppose, for instance, that an actor gets drunk and makes a fool of himself, or an actress gets hold of a rich cully and makes a fool of him! The green-room is sure to ring with all the particulars, and a few more than are true. All my kindred of the sock and buskin were informed at once of what had happened at the concert, and a blessed life they led me with their quips and quiddities. Never was there charity like theirs. Without beginning at home, heaven only knows where it ends! But I held myself too high to be affected by their jibes and jeers: nor did even the loss of the Duke de Medina Celi hang heavy on my spirits; for true it was, I never saw him more at my toilet, but learned, a very short time after, that he had got into the trammels of a little warbler.

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When a theatrical lady has the good luck to be in fashion, she may change her lover as often as her petticoat: and one noble fool, should he even recover his wits at the end of three days, serves excellently well for a decoy to his successor. No sooner was it buzzed about Madrid that the duke had raised the siege, than a new host of would-be conquerors appeared before the trenches. The very rivals whom I had sacrificed to his wishes, looking at my charms through the magnifying medium of delay and disappointment, came back again in crowds to encounter new caprices; to say nothing of a thousand fresh hearts, ready to bargain on the mere report of my being to let. I had never been so exclusively the mode. Of all the men who put in for being cajoled by me, a portly German, belonging to the Duke of Ossuna's household, seemed to bid highest. Not that his personal attractions were by any means the most catching; but then there were a thousand amiable pistoles on the list of candidates, scraped together by perquisites in his master's service, and turned adrift with the prodigality of a prince, in the hope of becoming my favored lover. This fat pigeon to be plucked was by name Brutandorf. As long as his pockets were lined, his reception was warm: empty purses meet with fastened doors. The principles on which my friendship rested were not altogether to his taste. He came to the play to look after me during the performance. I was behind the scenes. It was his humor to load me with reproaches; it was mine to laugh in his face. This

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provoked his boorish wrath, and he gave me a box on the ear, like a clumsy-fisted German as he was. I set up a loud scream: the business of the stage was suspended. I came forward to the front, and, addressing the Duke of Ossuna, who was at the play on that occasion with his lady duchess, begged his protection from the German gallantry of his establishment. The duke gave orders for our proceeding with the piece, and intimated that he would hear the parties after the curtain had dropped. At the conclusion of the play I presented myself in all the dreary pomp of tragedy before the duke, and laid open my griefs in all the majesty of woe. As for my German pugilist, his defence was on a level with his provocation: so far from being sorry for what he had done, his fingers itched to give me another dressing. The cause being heard pro and con, the Duke of Ossuna said to his Scandinavian savage, Brutandorf, I dismiss you from my service, and beg never to see anything more of you, not because you have given a box on the ear to an actress, but for your failure in respect to your master and mistress, in having presumed to interrupt the progress of the play in their presence.

This decision was a bitter pill for me to swallow. It was high treason against my histrionic majesty, that the German was not turned off on the ground of having insulted me. It seemed difficult to conceive the possibility of a greater crime than that of insulting a principal actress: and where crimes are parallel, punishments should tally. The retribution

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in this case would have been exemplary; and I expected no less. This unpleasant occurrence undeceived me, and proved, to my mortification, that the public distinguished between the actors and the personages they may chance to enact. On this conviction, my pride revolted at the theatre: I resolved to give up my engagements, to go and live at a distance from Madrid. I fixed on the city of Valencia for the place of my retreat, and went thither under a feigned character, with a property of twenty thousand ducats in money and jewels—a sum in my mind more than sufficient to maintain me for the remainder of my days, since it was my purpose to lead a retired life. I rented a small house at Valencia, and limited my establishment to a female servant and a page, who were as ignorant of my birth, parentage and education, as the rest of the town. I gave myself out for the widow of an officer belonging to the king's household, and intimated that I had made choice of Valencia for my residence, on the report that it was one of the most agreeable neighborhoods in Spain. I saw very little company, and maintained so reserved a deportment that there never was the slightest suspicion of my having been an actress. Yet, notwithstanding all the pains I took to hide myself from the garish eye of day, I had worse success against the piercing ken of a gentleman who had a country seat near Paterna. He was of an ancient family, in person genteel and manly, from five-and-thirty to forty years of age, nobly connected, but scandalously in debt—a contradiction in the

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vocabulary of honor, neither more unaccountable nor uncommon in the kingdom of Valencia, than what takes place every day in other parts of the civilized world.

This gentleman of a generation or two before the present, finding my person to his liking, was desirous of knowing if in other respects I was a commodity for his market. He set every engine at work to inquire into the most minute particulars, and had the pleasure to learn from general report, that I was a warm widow with a comfortable jointure, and a person little, if anything, the worse for wear. It struck him that this was just the match; so that in a very short time an old lady came to my house, telling me from him, that with equal admiration of my virtues and my charms, he laid himself and his fortune at my feet, and was ready to lead me to the altar, if I could condescend so far as to become his wife. I required three days to make up my mind on the subject. In this interval, I made inquiries about the gentleman; and hearing a good character of him, notwithstanding the deranged state of his finances, it was my determination to marry him without more ado, so that the preliminaries were soon ratified by a definitive treaty.

Don Manuel de Xerica—for that was my husband's name—took me immediately after the ceremony to his castle, which had an air of antiquity highly flattering to his family pride. He told a story about one of his ancestors who built it in days of yore, and because it was not founded the day before yesterday, jumped

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to a conclusion that there was not a more ancient house in Spain than that of Xerica. But nobility, like perishable merchandise, will run to decay; the castle, shored up on this side and on that, was in the very agony of tumbling to pieces: what a buttress for Don Manuel and for his old walls was his marriage with me! More than half my savings were laid out on repairs; and the residue was wanted to set us going in a genteel style among our country neighbors. Behold me then, you who can believe it, landed on a new planet, transformed into the presiding genius of a castle, the Lady Bountiful of my parish: our stage machinery could never have furnished such a change! I was too good an actress not to have supported my new rank and dignity with appropriate grace. I assumed high airs, theatrical grandeurs, a most dignified strut and demeanor; all which made the bumpkins conceive a wonderful idea of my exalted origin. How would they not have tickled their fancies at my expense, had they known the real truth of the case! The gentry of the neighborhood would have scoffed at me most unmercifully, and the country people would have been much more chary of the respect they showed me.

It was now near six years that I had lived very happily with Don Manuel, when he ended ways, means, and life together. My legacy consisted of a broken fortune to splice, and your sister Beatrice, then more than four years old, to maintain. The castle, which was our only tangible resource, was unfortunately mortgaged to several creditors,

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the principal of whom was one Bernard Astuto. Cunning by name, and cunning by nature! He practised as an attorney at Valencia, and bore his faculties in all the infamy of pettifogging; law and equity conspired in his person to push the trade of cozening and swindling to the utmost extremity. To think of falling into the clutches of such a creditor! A gentleman's property, under the gripe of such a claw as this attorney's, affords much the same sport as a lamb to a wolf, or a dove to a kite. Nearly after the fashion of these beasts and birds of prey, did Signor Astuto, when informed of my husband's death, hover over his victim, concealing his fell purpose under the ambush of the law. The whole estate would have been swallowed up in pleadings, affidavits, demurrers, and rejoinders, but for the light thrown upon the proceedings by my lucky star; under whose influence the plaintiff was turned at once into defendant, and was left without a reply to the arguments of these all-powerful eyes. I got to the blind side of him in an interview, which I contrived during the progress of our litigation. Nothing was wanting on my part—I own it frankly—to fill him brimful of the tender passion; an ardent longing to save my goods, chattels, and domain, made me practise upon him, to my own disgust, that system of coquettish tactics and flirtation which had drawn so many former fools into an ambuscade. Yet, with all the resources of a veteran, I was very near letting the attorney escape. He was so barricaded by mouldy parchments, so immured in

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actions and informations, as scarcely to seem susceptible of any love but the love of law. The truth, however, was, that this moping pettifogger, this porer over ponderous abridgments, this scrawler of acts and deeds, had more young blood in him than I was aware of, and a trick of looking at me out of the corner of his eye. He professed to be a novice in the art of courtship. My whole heart and soul, madam, said he, have been wedded to my profession; and the consequence has been, that the uses and customs of gallantry have seemed weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable to me. But though not a man of outward show, I am well furnished with the stock in trade of love. To come to the point at once, if you can resolve in your mind to marry me, we will make a grand bonfire of the whole lawsuit; and I will give the go-by to those rascally creditors, who have joined issue with me in our attack upon your estate. You shall have the life interest, and your daughter the reversion. So good a bargain for Beatrice and myself would not allow of any wavering: I closed without delay on the conditions. The attorney kept his word most miraculously: he turned short round upon the other creditors, defeated them with the very weapons himself had furnished for their joint campaign, and secured me in the possession of my house and lands. It was probably the first time in his life that he had taken up the cause of the widow and the orphan.

Thus did I become the honored wife of an attorney, without losing my rank as the lady of the

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manor. But this incongruous marriage ruined me in the esteem of the gentry about Valencia. The women of quality looked upon me as a person who had lowered herself, and refused any longer to visit me. This inevitably threw me on the acquaintance of the tradespeople; a circumstance which could not do otherwise than hurt my feelings a little at first, because I had been accustomed, for the last six years, to associate only with ladies of the higher classes. But it was in vain to fret about it; and I soon found my level. I got most intimately acquainted with the wives of my husband's brethren of the quill and brief. Their characters were not a little entertaining. There was an absurdity in their manners which tickled me to the very soul. These trumpery fine ladies held themselves up for something far above the common run. Well-a-day! said I, to myself, every now and then, when they forgot the blue bag: this is the way of the world! Every one fancies himself to be something vastly superior to his neighbor. I thought we actresses only did not know our places; women at the lower end of private life, as far as I see, are just as absurd in their pretensions. I should like, by way of check upon their presumption, to propose a law, that family pictures and pedigrees should be hung up in every house. Were the situation left to the choice of the owner, the deuce is in it if these legal gentry would not cram their scrivening ancestors either into the cellar or the garret.

After four years passed in the holy state of wed-

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lock, Signor Bernardo d'Astuto fell sick, and went the way of all flesh. We had no family. Between my settlement and what I was worth before, I found myself a well-endowed widow. I had too the reputation of being so; and on this report, a Sicilian gentleman, by name Colifichini, determined to stick in my skirts, and either ruin or marry me. The alternative was kindly left to my owa choice. He was come from Palermo to see Spain, and, after having satisfied his curiosity, was waiting, as he said at Valencia for an opportunity of taking his passage back to Sicily. The spark was not quite five-and-twenty; of an elegant, though diminutive person; . . . . in short, his figure absolutely haunted me. He found the means of getting to the speech of me in private; and, I will own it to you frankly, I fell distractedly in love with him from the moment of our very first interview. On his part, the little knave flounced over head and ears in admiration of my charms. I do really think—God forgive me for it—that we should have been married out of hand, if the death of the attorney, whose funeral baked meats were scarcely cold enough to have furnished forth the marriage tables, would have allowed me to contract a new engagement at so short a warning. But, since I had got into the matrimonial line, it was necessary that where the church makes the feast, the devil should not send cooks; I therefore took care always to season my nuptials to the palate of the world at large.

Thus did we agree to delay our coming to-

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gether for a time, out of a tender regard to appearances. Colifichini, in the mean time, devoted all his attentions to me: his passion, far from languishing, seemed to become more a part of himself from day to day. The poor lad was not too flush of ready money. This struck my observation; and he was no longer at a loss for his little pocket expenses. Besides being very nearly twice his age, I recollected having laid the men under contribution in my younger days; so that I looked upon what I was then lavishing as a sort of restitution, which balanced my debtor and creditor account, and made me quits with my conscience. We waited, as patiently as our frailty would allow, for the period when widows may in decency so far surmount their grief as to try their luck again. When the happy morning rose, we presented ourselves before the altar, where we plighted our faith to each other by oaths the most solemn and binding. We then retired to my castle, where I may truly say that we lived for two years, less as husband and wife than as tender and unfettered lovers. But alas! such a union, so happy and sentimental, was not long to be the lot of humanity: a pleurisy carried off my dear Colifichini.

At this passage in her history, I interrupted my mother. Heyday! madam, your third husband despatched already? You must be a most deadly taking. What do you mean? answered she: is it for me to dispute the will of heaven, and lengthen the days parcelled out to every son of earth? If I have lost three husbands, it was none of my fault. Two

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of them cost me many a salt tear. If I buried any with dry eyes, it was the attorney. As that was merely a match of interest, I was easily reconciled to the loss of him. But to return to Colifichini: I was going to tell you, that some months after his death, I had a mind to go and take possession of a country house near Palermo, which he had settled on me as a jointure, by our marriage contract. I took my passage for Sicily with my daughter: but we were taken on the voyage by Algerine corsairs. This city was our destination. Happily for us, you happened to be at the market where we were put up for sale. Had it been otherwise, we must have fallen into the hands of some barbarian purchaser, who would have used us ill; and we probably might have passed our whole life in slavery, nor would you ever have heard of us.

Such was my mother's story. To return to my own, gentlemen, I gave her the best apartment in my house, with the liberty of living after her own fashion; which was a circumstance very agreeable to her taste. She had a confirmed habit of loving, brought to such a system by so many repeated experiments, that it was impossible for her to do without either a gallant or a husband. At first she looked with favor upon some of my slaves: but Hali Pegelin, a Greek renegado, who sometimes came and called upon us, soon drew all her glances on himself. She conceived a stronger passion for him than she had ever done for Colifichini: and such was her aptitude for pleasing the men, that she

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found the way to wind herself about the heart of this man also. I seemed as if unconscious of their good understanding; being then intent only on my return into Spain. The bashaw had already given me leave to fit out a vessel, for the purpose of sweeping the sea and committing acts of piracy. This armament was my sole object. Just a week before it was completed, I said to Lucinda, Madam, we shall take our leave of Algiers almost immediately; so that you will bid a long farewell to an abode which you cannot but detest.

My mother turned pale at these words, and stood silent and motionless. My surprise was extreme. What do I see? said I to her: whence comes it that you present such an image of terror and despair? My design was to fill you with transport; but the effect of my intelligence seems only to overwhelm you with affliction. I thought to have been thanked for my welcome news; and hastened with eagerness to tell you that all is ready for our departure. Are you no longer in the mind to go back into Spain? No, my son; Spain no longer has any charms for me, answered my mother. It has been the scene of all my sorrows, and I have turned my back on it for ever. What do I hear? exclaimed I, in an agony: ah! tell me rather that it is a fatal passion which alienates you from your native country. Just heavens! what a change! When you landed here, every object that met your eyes was hateful to them, but Hali Pegelin has given another color to your fancy. I do not deny it, replied Lucinda: I

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love that renegado, and mean to take him for my fourth husband. What an idea! interrupted I, with horror: you to marry a Mussulman! You forget yourself to be a Christian, or rather have hitherto been one only in name, and not in heart. Ah! my dear mother, what a futurity do you present to my imagination! You are running headlong to your eternal ruin. You are going to do voluntarily, and from impure motives, what I have only done under the pressure of necessity.

I urged many other arguments, in the same strain, to turn her aside from her purpose, but all my eloquence was wasted; she had made up her mind to her future destiny. Not satisfied with following the bent of her base inclinations, and leaving her son to go and live with this renegado, she had even formed a design to settle Beatrice in her own family. This I opposed with all my might and main. Ah! wretched Lucinda, said I, if nothing is capable of keeping you within the limits of your duty, at least rush on perdition alone; confine within yourself the fury which possesses you; cast not a young innocent headlong over a precipice, though you yourself may venture on the leap. Lucinda quitted my presence in moody silence. It struck me that a remnant of reason still enlightened her, and that she would not obstinately persevere in requiring her daughter to be given up to her. How little did I know of my mother! One of my slaves said to me two days afterwards, Sir, take care of yourself. A captive belonging to Pegelin has just let me into a secret,

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of which you cannot too soon avail yourself. Your mother has changed her religion; and as a punishment upon you for having refused Beatrice to her wishes, it is her purpose to acquaint the bashaw with your flight. I could not for a moment doubt but what Lucinda was the woman to do just what my slave had said she would. The lady had given me manifold opportunities of studying her character; and it was sufficiently evident that, by dint of playing bloody parts in tragedy, she had familiarized herself with the guilty scenes of real life. It would not in the least have gone against her nature to have got me burned alive; nor, probably, would she have been more affected by my exit after that fashion, than by the winding up of a dramatic tale.

The warning of my slave, therefore, was not to be neglected. My embarkation was hastened on. I took some Turks on board, according to the practice of the Algerine corsairs when going on a piratical expedition; but I engaged no more than was necessary to blind the eyes of jealousy, and weighed anchor from the port as soon as possible, with all my slaves and my sister Beatrice. You will do right to suppose that I did not forget, in that moment of anxiety, to pack up my whole stock of money and jewels, amounting probably to the worth of six thousand ducats. When we were fairly out at sea, we began by securing the Turks. They were easily mastered, as my slaves outnumbered them. We had so favorable a wind, that we made the coast of Italy in a very short time. Without let or hinderance,

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we got into the harbor of Leghorn, where I thought the whole city must have come out to see us land. The father of my slave Azarini, either accidentally or from curiosity, happened to be among the gazers. He looked with all his eyes at my captives, as they came ashore; but, though his object was to discover his lost son among the number, it was with little hope of so fortunate a result. But how powerful is the plea of nature! What transports, expressed by mutual embraces, followed the recognition of a tie so close, but so painfully interrupted for a time!

As soon as Azarini had acquainted his father who I was, and what brought me to Leghorn, the old man obliged me, as well as Beatrice, to accept of an apartment in his house. I shall pass over in silence the description of a thousand ceremonies, necessary to be gone through, in order to my return into the bosom of the church; suffice it to say, that I forswore Mahometanism with much more sincerity than I had pledged myself to it. After having entirely purged myself from my Algerine leaven, I sold my ship, and set all my slaves at liberty. As for the Turks, they were committed to prison at Leghorn, to be exchanged against Christians. I received kind attention in abundance from the Azarini family; indeed, the young man married my sister Beatrice, who, to speak the truth, was no bad match for him, being a gentleman's daughter, and inheriting the castle of Xerica, which my mother had taken care to let out to a rich farmer of Paterna, when she resolved upon her voyage to Sicily.

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From Leghorn, after having staid there some time, I departed for Florence, a town I had a strong desire to see. I did not go thither without letters of recommendation. Azarini, the father, had connections at the grand duke's court, and introduced me to them as a Spanish gentleman related to his family. I tacked don to my name, in honest rivalry of impudence with other low Spaniards, who take up that travelling title of honor without compunction, when far enough from home to set detection at defiance. Boldly then did I dub myself Don Raphael, and appeared at court with suitable splendor, on the strength of what I had brought from Algiers, to keep my nobility from starving. The high personages to whom old Azarini had written in my favor, gave out in their circle that I was a person of quality; so that with this testimony, and a natural knack I had of giving myself airs, the deuce must have been in it if I could not have passed muster for a man of some consequence. I soon got to be hand in glove with the principal nobility, and they presented me to the grand duke. I had the good fortune to make myself agreeable. It then became an object with me to pay court to that prince, and to study his humor. I sucked in with greedy ear all that his most experienced courtiers said about him, and by their conversation fathomed all his peculiarities. Among other things, he encouraged a play of wit; was fond of good stories and lively repartees. On this hint I formed myself. Every morning I wrote down in my pocket-book such anecdotes as I meant

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to rack off in the course of the day. My stock was considerably extensive, so that I was a walking budget of balderdash. Yet even my estate in nonsense required economy, and I began to get out at elbows, so as to be reduced to borrow from myself, and mortgage my resources twenty times over; but when the shallow current of my wit and wisdom was nearly at its summer drought, a torrent of matter-of-fact lies gave new force to the exhausted stream of quibble. Intrigues which never had been intrigued, and practical jokes which had never been played off, were the tools I worked with, and exactly to the level of the grand duke; nay, what often happens to dull dealers in inextinguishable vivacity, the mornings were spent in financiering those funds of conversation, which were to be drawn upon after dinner, as if from a perennial spring of preternatural wealth.

I had even the impudence to set up for a poet, and made my broken-winded muse trot to the praises of the prince. I allow candidly that the verses were execrable; but then they were quite good enough for their readers; and it remains a doubt whether, if they had been better, the grand duke would not have thrown them into the fire. They seemed to be just what he would have written upon himself. In short, it was impossible to miss the proper style on such a subject. But whatever might be my merit as a poet, the prince, by little and little, took such a liking to my person, as gave occasion of jealousy to his courtiers. They tried to find out who I was. This, however, was beyond their compass. All they

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could learn was, that I had been a renegado. This was whispered forthwith in the prince's ear, in the hopes of hurting me. Not that it succeeded: on the contrary, the grand duke one day commanded me to give him a faithful account of my adventures at Algiers. I obeyed, and the recital, without reserve on my part, contributed more than any other of my stories to his entertainment.

Don Raphael, said he, after I had ended my narrative, I have a real regard for you, and mean to give you a proof of it, which will place my sincerity beyond a doubt. Henceforth you are admitted into my most private confidence, as the first fruits of which, you are to know that one of my ministers has a wife, with whom I am in love. She is the most enchanting creature at court, but at the same time the most impregnable. Shut up in her own household, exclusively attached to a husband who idolizes her, she seems to be ignorant of the combustion her charms have kindled in Florence. You will easily conceive the difficulty of such a conquest. And yet this epitome of loveliness, so deaf to all the whispers of common seduction, has sometimes listened to my sighs. I have found the means of speaking to her without witnesses. She is not unacquainted with my sentiments. I do not flatter myself with having warmed her into love; she has given me no reason to form so sweet a conjecture. Yet I will not despair of pleasing her by my constancy, and by the cautious conduct, even to mystery, which I take care to observe.

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My passion for this lady, continued he, is known only to herself. Instead of pursuing my game wantonly, and overleaping the rights of my subjects, like a true sovereign, I conceal from all the world the knowledge of my love. This delicacy seems due to Mascarini, the husband of my beloved mistress. His zeal and attachment to me, his services and honesty, oblige me to act in this business with the closest secrecy and circumspection. I will not plunge a dagger into the bosom of this ill-starred husband, by declaring myself a suitor to his wife. Would he might forever be insensible, were it within possibility, to the secret flame which devours me; for I am persuaded that he would die of grief were he to know the circumstances I have just now confided to you. I therefore veil my pursuit in impenetrable darkness, and have determined to make use of you for the purpose of conveying to Lucretia the merit of the sacrifices my delicacy imposes on my feelings. Of these you shall be the interpreter. I doubt not but you will acquit yourself to a marvel of your commission. Contrive to be intimate with Mascarini; make a point of worming yourself into his friendship. Then an introduction to his family will be easy; and you will secure to yourself the liberty of conversing freely with his wife. This is what I require from you, and what I feel assured that you will execute with all the dexterity and discretion necessary to so delicate an undertaking.

I promised the grand duke to do my utmost in furtherance of his good opinion, and in aid of his

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success with the object of his desires. I kept my word without loss of time. No pains were spared to get into Mascarini's good graces; and the design was not difficult to accomplish. Delighted to find his friendship sought by a man possessing the affections of the prince, he advanced half way to meet my overtures. His house was always open to me; my intercourse with his lady was unrestrained; and I have no hesitation in affirming my measures to have been taken so well, as to have precluded the slightest suspicion of the embassy intrusted to my management. It is true, he had but a small share of the Italian jealousy, relying as he did on the virtue of his Lucretia; so that he often shut himself up in his closet, and left me alone with her. I entered at once into the pith and marrow of my subject. The grand duke's passion was my topic with the lady; and I told her that the motive of my visits was only to plead for that prince. She did not seem to be over head and ears in love with him; and yet, methought, vanity forbade her to frown decisively on his addresses. She took a pleasure in listening to his sighs, without sighing in concert. A certain propriety of heart she had; but then she was a woman, and it was obvious that her rigor was giving way insensibly to the triumphant image of a sovereign bound in the fetters of her resistless charms. In short, the prince had good reason to flatter himself that he might dispense with the ill-breeding of a Tarquin, and yet bend Lucretia to a compliance with his longings. An incident, how-

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ever, the most unexpected in the annals of romance, blasted his flattering prospects; in what manner you shall hear.

I am naturally free and easy with the women. This constitutional assurance, whether a blessing or a curse, was ripened into inveterate habit among the Turks. Lucretia was a pretty woman. I forgot that I was courting by proxy, and assumed the tone of a principal. Nothing could exceed the warmth and gallantry with which I offered my services to the lady. Far from appearing offended at my boldness, or silencing me by a resentful answer, she only said, with a sarcastic smile, Own the truth, Don Raphael; the grand duke has pitched upon a very faithful and zealous agent. You serve him with an integrity not sufficiently to be commended. Madam, said I in the same strain, let us not examine things with too much nicety. A truce, I beseech you, with moral discussions; they are not of my element: good honest passion tallies better with our natures. I do not believe myself, after all, the first prince's confidant who has ousted his master in an affair of gallantry; your great lords have often dangerous rivals in more humble messengers than myself. That may be, replied Lucretia: but a haughty temper stands with me in the place of virtue, and no one under the degree of a prince shall ever sully these charms. Regulate your behavior accordingly, added she in a tone of serious severity, and let us change the subject. I willingly bury your presumption in oblivion, provided you never hold similar discourse to me again: if you do, you may repent of it.

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Though this was a comment of some importance on my text, and ought to have been heedfully conned over, it was no bar to my still entertaining Mascacarini's wife with my passion. I even pressed her, with more importunity than heretofore, for a kind consent to my tender entreaties; and was rash enough to feel my ground, by some little personal freedoms. The lady then, offended at my words, and still more at my Mahometan quips and cranks, gave a complete set down to my assurance. She threatened to acquaint the grand duke with my impertinence; and declared she would make a point of his punishing me as I deserved. These menaces bristled up my spirit in return. My love turned at once into hatred, and determined me to revenge myself for the contempt with which Lucretia had treated me. I went in quest of her husband; and after having bound him by oath not to betray me, I informed him of his wife's correspondence with the prince, and failed not to represent her as distractedly enamoured of him, by way of heightening the interest of the scene. The minister, lest the plot should become too intricately entangled, shut his wife up, without any law but his own will, in a secret apartment, where he placed her under the strict guard of confidential persons. While she was thus kept at bay by the watch-dogs of jealousy, who prevented her from acquainting the grand duke with her situation, I announced to that prince, with a melancholy air, that he must think no longer of Lucretia. I told him that Mascarini had doubtless discovered all, since he

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had taken it into his head to keep a guard over his wife; that I could not conceive what had induced him to suspect me, as I flattered myself with having always behaved according to the most approved rules of discretion in such cases. The lady might, I suggested, have been beforehand, and owned all to her husband; and had, perhaps, in concert with him, suffered herself to be immured, in order to lie hid from a pursuit so dangerous to her virtue. The prince appeared deeply afflicted at my relation. I was not unmoved by his distress, and repented more than once of what I had done; but it was too late to retract. Besides, I must acknowledge, a spiteful joy tingled in my veins, when I meditated on the distressed condition of the disdainful fair who had spurned my vows.

I was feeding with impunity on the pleasure of revenge, so palatable to all the world, but most of all to Spaniards, when one day the grand duke, chatting with five or six nobles of his court and myself, said to us, In what manner would you judge it fitting for a man to be punished, who should have abused the confidence of his prince, and designed to step in between him and his mistress? The best way, said one of the courtiers, would be to have him torn to pieces by four horses. Another gave it as his verdict that he should be soundly beaten till he died under the blows of the executioner. The most tender-hearted and merciful of these Italians, with comparative lenity towards the culprit, wished only just to admonish him of his fault, by throwing

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him from the top of a tower to the bottom. And Don Raphael, resumed the grand duke after a pause, what is his opinion? The Spaniards, in all likelihood, would improve upon our Italian severity, in a case of such aggravated treachery.

I fully understood, as you may well suppose, that Mascarini had not kept his oath, or that his wife had devised the means of acquainting the prince with what had passed between her and me. My countenance sufficiently betokened my inward agitation. But for all that, suppressing as well as I could my rising emotion and alarm, I replied to the grand duke in a steady tone of voice, My lord, the Spaniards are more generous; under such circumstances, they would pardon the unworthy betrayer of his trust, and by that act of unmerited goodness would kindle in his soul an everlasting abhorrence of his own villany. Yes, truly, said the prince, and I feel in my own breast a similar spirit of forbearance. Let the traitor then be pardoned; since I have myself only to blame for having given my confidence to a man of whom I had no knowledge, but, on the contrary, much ground of suspicion, according to the current of common report. Don Raphael, added he, my revenge shall be confined to this single interdict. Quit my dominions immediately, and never appear again in my presence. I withdrew in all haste, less hurt at my disgrace, than delighted to have got off so cheaply. The very next day I embarked in a Barcelona ship, just setting sail from the port of Leghorn on its return.

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At this period of his history I interrupted Don Raphael to the following effect: For a man of shrewdness, methinks you were not a little off your guard, in trusting yourself at Florence for even so short a time, after having discovered the prince's love of Lucretia to Mascarini. You might well have foreboded that the grand duke would not be long in getting to the knowledge of your duplicity. Your observation is very just, answered the well-matched son of so eccentric a mother as Lucinda; and for that reason, not trusting to the minister's promise of screening me from his master's indignation, it had been my intention to disappear without taking leave.

I got safe to Barcelona, continued he, with the remnant of the wealth I had brought from Algiers; but the greater part had been squandered at Florence in enacting the Spanish gentleman. I did not stay long in Catalonia. Madrid was the dear place of my nativity, and I had a longing desire to see it again, which I satisfied as soon as possible; for mine was not a temper to stand parleying with its own inclinations. On my arrival in town, I chanced to take up my abode in a ready-furnished lodging, where dwelt a lady, by name Camilla. Though at some distance from her teens, she was a very spirit-stirring creature, as Signor Gil Blas will bear me out in saying; for he fell in with her at Valladolid nearly about the same time. Her parts were still more extraordinary than her beauty; and never had a lady with a character to let a happier talent of inveigling fools

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to their ruin. But she was not like those selfish jilts who put out the cullibility of their lovers to usury. The pillage of the plodding merchant, or the grave family man, was squandered upon the first gambler or prize-fighter who happened to find his way into her frolicsome fancy.

We loved one another from the first moment, and the conformity of our tempers bound us so closely together, that we soon lived on the footing of joint property. The amount, in sober sadness, was little better than a cipher, and a few good dinners more reduced it to that ignoble negative of number. We were each of us thinking, as the deuce would have it, of our mutual pleasures, without profiting in the least by those happy dispositions of ours for living at the expense of other folks. Want at last gave a keener edge to our wits, which indulgence had blunted. My dear Raphael, said Camilla, let us carry the war into the enemy's quarters, if you love me; for while we are as faithful as turtles, we are as foolish, and fall into our own snare, instead of laying it for the unwary. You may get into the head and heart of a rich widow; I may conjure myself into the good graces of some old nobleman: but as for this ridiculous fidelity, it brings no grist to the mill. Excellent Camilla, answered I, you are beforehand with me. I was going to make the very same proposal. It exactly meets my ideas, thou paragon of morality. Yes; the better to maintain our mutual fire, let us forage for substantial fuel. As good may always be extracted out of evil, those

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infidelities which are the bane of other loves shall be the triumph of ours.

On the basis of this treaty we took the field. At first there was much cry, but little wool; for we had no luck at finding cullies. Camilla met with nothing but pretty fellows, with vanity in their hearts, tinsel on their backs, and not a maravedi in their pockets; my ladies were all of a kidney to levy rather than to pay contributions. As love left us in the lurch, we paid our devotions at the shrine of knavery. With the zeal of martyrs to a new religion did we encounter the frowns of the civil power, whose myrmidons, as like the devil in their nature as their office, were ordered on the lookout after us; but the alguazil, with all the good qualities of which the corregidor inherited the contraries, gave us time to make our escape out of Madrid, for the good of the trade and a small sum of money. We took the road to Valladolid, meaning to set up in that town. I rented a house for myself and Camilla, who passed for my sister to avoid evil tongues. At first we kept a tight rein over our speculative talents, and began by reconnoitring the ground before we determined on our plan of operations.

One day a man accosted me in the street, with a very civil salutation, to this effect: Signor Don Raphael, do you recollect my face? I answered in the negative. Then I have the advantage of you, replied he, for yours is perfectly familiar to me. I have seen you at the court of Tuscany, where I was then in the grand duke's guards. It is some months

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since I quitted that prince's service. I came into Spain with an Italian, who will not discredit the politics of his country: we have been at Valladolid these three weeks. Our residence is with a Castilian and a Galician, who are, without dispute, two of the best creatures in the world. We live together by the sweat of our brows and the labor of our hands. Our fare is not abstemious, nor have we made any vow against the temptations of a life about the court. If you will make one of our party, my brethren will be glad of your company; for you always seemed to me a man of spirit, above all vulgar prejudices, in short, a monk of our order.

Such frankness from this arch scoundrel was met half way by mine. Since you talk to me with so winning a candor, said I, you deserve that I should be equally explicit with you. In good truth I am no novice in your ritual; and if my modesty would allow me to be the hero of my own tale, you would be convinced that your compliments were not lavished on an unworthy subject. But enough of my own commendations; proceed we to the point in question. With all possible desire to become a member of your body, I shall neglect no opportunity of proving my title to that distinction. I had no sooner told this sharper at all points, that I would agree to swell the number of his gang, than he conducted me to their place of meeting, and introduced me in proper form. It was on this occasion that I first saw the renowned Ambrose de Lamela. These gentlemen catechised me in the religion of coveting

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my neighbor's goods, and doing as I would not be done by. They wanted to discern whether I played the villain on principle, or had only some little practical dexterity; but I showed them tricks which they did not know to be on the cards, and yet acknowledged to be better than their own. They were still deeper lost in admiration, when, in cool disdain of manual artifice, as an every-day effort of ingenuity, I maintained my prowess in such combinations of roguery as require an inventive brain and a solid judgment to support them. In proof of these pretensions, I related the adventure of Jerome de Moyadas; and on this single specimen of my parts, they conceived my genius of so high an order, as to elect me by common consent for their leader. Their choice was fully justified by a host of slippery devices, of which I was the master-wheel, the corner-stone, or according to whatever other metaphor in mechanics you may best express the soul of a conspiracy. When we had occasion for a female performer to heighten the interest, Camilla was sent upon the stage, and played up to admiration in the parts she had to perform.

Just at that period, our friend and brother Ambrose was seized with a longing to see his native country once more. He went for Galicia, with an assurance that we might reckon on his return. The visit cured his patriotic sickness. As he was on the road back, having halted at Burgos to strike some stroke of business, an innkeeper of his acquaintance introduced him into the service of Signor Gil Blas

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de Santillane, not forgetting to instruct him thoroughly in the state of that gentleman's affairs. Signor Gil Blas, pursued Don Raphael, addressing his discourse to me, you know in what manner we eased you of your movables in a ready-furnished lodging at Valladolid; and you must doubtless have suspected Ambrose to have been the principal contriver of that exploit, and not without reason. On his coming into town, he ran himself out of breath to find us, and laid open every particular of your situation, so that the associated swindlers had nothing to do but to build on his foundation. But you are unacquainted with the consequences of that adventure; you shall therefore have them on my authority. Your portmanteau was made free with by Ambrose and myself. We also took the liberty of riding your mules in the direction of Madrid, not dropping the least hint to Camilla nor to our partners in iniquity, who must have partaken in some measure of your feelings in the morning, at finding their glory shorn of two such beams.

On the second day we changed our purpose. Instead of going to Madrid, whence I had not sallied forth without an urgent motive, we passed by Zebreros, and continued our journey as far as Toledo. Our first care, in that town, was to dress ourselves in the genteelest style; then, assuming the character of two brothers from Galicia on our travels of mere curiosity, we soon got acquainted in the most respectable circles. I was so much in the habit of acting the man of fashion, as not easily to

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be detected; and as the generality of people are blinded by a free expenditure, we threw dust into the eyes of all the world, by the elegant entertainments to which we invited the ladies. Among the women who frequented our parties, there was one not indifferent to me. She appeared more beautiful than Camilla, and certainly much younger. I inquired who she was; and learned that her name was Violante, and that she was married to an ungrateful spark, who soon grew weary of her chaste caresses, and was running after those of a prostitute, with whom he was in love. There was no need to say any more to determine me on enthroning Violante the sovereign lady and mistress of my thoughts and affections.

She was not long in coming to the knowledge of her conquest. I began by following her about from place to place, and playing a hundred monkey tricks to instil into her comprehension that nothing would please me better than the office of making her amends for the ill usage of her husband. The pretty creature ruminated on my proffered kindness, and to such purpose as to let me know in the end that my labor was not wasted on an ungrateful soil. I received a note from her in answer to several I had transmitted by one of those convenient old dowagers in such high request throughout Spain and Italy. The lady sent me word that her husband supped with his mistress every evening, and did not return home till very late. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of this. On that very night I

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planted myself under Violante's windows, and engaged her in a most tender conversation. At the moment of parting, it was settled between us that every evening, at the same hour, we should meet and converse on the same everlasting topic, without gainsaying any such other acts of gallantry as might safely be submitted to the peering eye of day.

Hitherto Don Balthazar, as Violante's husband was called, had no reason to complain of his forehead; but I was a natural philosopher, and little satisfied with metaphysical endearments. One evening, therefore, I repaired under my lady's windows, with the design of telling her that there was an end of life and everything if we could not come together on more accommodating terms than from the balcony to the street; for I had never yet been able to get into the house. Just as I got thither, a man came within sight, apparently with the view of dogging me. In fact, it was the husband returning earlier than usual from his precious bit of amusement; but observing a male nuisance near his nunnery, instead of coming straight home, he walked backwards and forwards in the street. It was almost a moot point with me what I ought to do. At last, I resolved on accosting Don Balthazar, though neither of us had the slightest knowledge of each other. Noble gentleman, said I, you would do me a most particular favor by leaving the street vacant to me for this one night; I would do as much for you another time. Sir, answered he, I was just going to make the same request to you;

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I am on the lookout after a girl, over whom a confounded fellow of a brother keeps watch and ward like a jailer; and she lives not twenty yards from this place. I could wish to carry on my project without a witness. We have the means, replied I, of attaining both our ends without clashing; for the lady of my desires lives there, added I, pointing to his own house. We had better even help one another, in case of being attacked. With all my heart, resumed he; I will go to my appointment, and we will make common cause, if need be. Under this pretence he went away, but only to observe me the more narrowly; and the darkness of the night favored his doing so without detection.

As for me, I made up to Violante's balcony in the simplicity of my heart. She soon heard my signal, and we began our usual parley. I was not remiss in pressing the idol of my worship to grant me a private interview in some safe and practicable place. She was rather coy to my entreaties, as favors hardly earned are the higher valued: at length she took a letter out of her pocket, and flung it down to me. There, said she, you will find in that scrap of paper the promise of what you have teased me so long about. She then withdrew, as the hour approached when her husband usually came home. I put the note up carefully, and went towards the place where Don Balthazar had told me that his business lay. But that stanch husband, with the sagacity of an old sportsman where his own wife was the game, came more than half way to meet

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me, with this question: Well, good sir, are you satisfied with your happy fortunes? I have reason to be so, answered I. And as for yourself, what have you done? Has the blind god befriended you? Alas! quite the contrary, replied he; that impertinent brother, who takes such liberties with my beauty, thought fit to come back from his country house, whence we hugged ourselves as sure that he would not return till to-morrow. This infernal chance has put all my soft and soothing pleasures out of tune.

Nothing could exceed the mutual pledges of lasting friendship, which were exchanged between Don Balthazar and me. To draw the cords the closer, we made an appointment for the next morning in the great square. This plotting gentleman, after we had parted, betook himself to his own house, without giving Violante at all to understand that he knew more about her than she wished him. On the following day he was punctual in the great square, and I was not five minutes after him. We exchanged greetings with all the warmth of old friendship; but it was a vapor to mislead on his part, though a spark of heavenly flame on mine. In the course of conversation, this hypocritical Don Balthazar palmed upon me a fictitious confidence, respecting his intrigue with the lady about whom he had been speaking the night before. He put together a long story he had been manufacturing on that subject, and all this to hook me in to tell him, in return, by what means I had got acquainted with

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Violante. The snare was too subtle for me to escape; I owned all with the innocence of a new-born babe. I did not even stick at showing the note I had received from her, and read the contents, to the following purport: "I am going to-morrow to dine with Donna Inez. You know where she lives. It is in the house of that confidential friend that I mean to pass some happy moments along with you. It is impossible longer to refuse a boon your patience has so well merited."

Here indeed, said Don Balthazar, is an epistle which promises to crown all your wishes at once. I congratulate you beforehand on your approaching happiness. He could not help fidgeting and wriggling a little while he talked in these terms of his own household; but all his hitches and wry faces passed off, and my eyes were as fast sealed as ever. I was so full of anticipating titillations, as not to think of noticing my new friend, who was obliged to get off as fast as he could, for fear of betraying his agitation in my presence. He ran to acquaint his brother-in-law with this strange occurrence. I know not what might pass between them: it is only certain that Don Balthazar happened to knock at Donna Inez's door just when I was at that lady's house with Violante. We were warned who it was, and I escaped by a back door exactly as he went in at the front. As soon as I had got safe off, the women, whom the unexpected visit of this troublesome husband had disconcerted a little, recovered their presence of mind, and with it so large a stock

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of assurance, as to stand the brunt of his attack, and put him to a nonplus in ascertaining whether they had hid me or smuggled me out. I cannot exactly tell you what he said to Donna Inez and his wife; nor do I believe that history will ever furnish any authentic particulars of the squabble.

In the mean time, without suspecting yet how completely I was gulled by Don Balthazar, I sallied forth with curses in my mouth, and returned to the great square, where I had appointed Lamela to meet me. But no Lamela was there. He also had his little snug parties, and the scoundrel fared better than his comrade. As I was waiting for him, I caught a glimpse of my treacherous associate, with a knowing smile upon his countenance. He made up to me, and inquired, with a hearty laugh, what news of my assignation with my nymph, under the convenient roof of Donna Inez. I cannot conceive, said I, what evil spirit, jealous of my joys, takes delight to nip them in their blossom: but after we had embraced, kissed, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy, comes the peaking cornuto of a husband (the Furies fly away with him), and knocks at the door in the instant of our encounter. There was nothing to be done but to secure my retreat as fast as possible. So I got out at a back door, sending to all the inhabitants of hell and its suburbs the jealous knave, who was so uncivil as to search another lady's house for his own horns. I am sorry you sped so ill-favoredly, exclaimed Don Balthazar, who was chuckling with

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inward satisfaction at my disappointment. What a mechanical rogue of a husband! I would advise you to show no mercy to the wittol. O, you need not teach me how to predominate over such a peasant, replied I. Take my word for it, a new quarter shall be added to his coat of arms this very night. His wife, when I went away, told me not to be faint-hearted for such a trifle, but to place myself without fail under her windows at an earlier hour than usual, for she was resolved to let me into the house; and, as a precaution against all accidents, she begged me to bring two or three friends in my train, for fear of a surprise. What a discreet and inventive lady! said he. I should have no objection to being of your party. Ah! my dear friend, exclaimed I, out of wits with joy, and throwing my arms about Don Balthazar's neck, how infinitely you will oblige me! I will do more, resumed he; I know a young man, armed like another Cæsar, for either field of love or war; he shall be of our number, and you may then rely boldly on the sufficiency of your escort.

I knew not in what words to thank this seeming friend, so that my gratitude might be equivalent to his zeal. To make short of the matter, I accepted his proffered aid. Our meeting was fixed under Violante's balcony early in the evening, and we parted. He went in quest of his brother-in-law, who was the hero in question. As for me, I walked about all day with Lamela, who had no more misgivings than myself, though somewhat astonished at

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the warmth with which Don Balthazar engaged in my interests. We slipped our own necks completely into the noose. I own this was mere infatuation on our parts, whose natural instinct ought to have warned us of a halter. When I thought it proper time to present myself under Violante's windows, Ambrose and I took care to be armed with small swords. There we found the husband of my fair dame and another man, waiting for us with a very determined air. Don Balthazar accosted me, and introducing his brother-in-law, said, Sir, this is the brave officer whose prowess I have extolled so highly to you. Make the best of your way into your mistress's house, and let no fear of the consequences be any bar to the enjoyment of the most rapturous human bliss.

After a mutual interchange of compliments, I knocked at Violante's door. It was opened by a kind of duenna. In I went, and without looking back after what was passing behind me, made the best of my way to the lady's room. While I was paying her my preliminary civilities, the two cutthroats who had followed me into the house, and had banged the door after them so violently, that Ambrose was left in the street, made their appearance. You may well suppose that then was the appeal to arms. They both fell upon me at the same time; but I showed them some play. I kept them engaged on either side so fiercely, that they were sorry, perhaps, not to have taken a safer road to their revenge. The husband was run through the body.

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His brother-in-law, seeing him on his travels to the shades below, made the best of his way to the door, which the duenna and Violante had opened, to make their escape while we were fighting. I ran after him into the street, where I met with Lamela once more, who, by dint of not being able to get a word out of the women, running as they did for their very lives, did not know exactly what he was to divine from the infernal noise he had just heard. We got back to our inn. After packing up what was best worth taking with us, we mounted our mules, and got out of town, without waiting for daybreak or fear of robbers.

It was sufficiently clear that this business was not likely to be without its consequences, and that a hue and cry would be set up in Toledo, which we should act like wise men to anticipate by a retreat. We staid the night at Villarubia. At the inn where we put up, some time after our arrival, there alighted a tradesman of Toledo on his way to Segorba. We clubbed our suppers. He related to us the tragical catastrophe of Violante's husband; and so far was he from suspecting us of being parties concerned, that we inquired into particulars with the curious indifference of common newsmongers. Gentlemen, said he, just as I was setting out this morning, the report of this melancholy event was handed about. Every one was on the hunt after Violante; and they say that the corregidor, a relation of Don Balthazar, is determined on sparing no pains to discover the perpetrators of this murder. So much for my knowledge of the business.

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The corregidor of Toledo and his police gave me very little uneasiness. But, for fear of the worst, I determined to precipitate my retreat from New Castile. It occurred to me that Violante, when hunted out of her hiding-place, would turn informer, and in that case she might give such a description of my person to the clerks in office, as might enable them to put their scouts upon a right scent. For this reason, on the following day we struck out of the high road, as a measure of safety. Fortunately Lamela was acquainted with three fourths of Spain, and knew by what cross paths we could get securely into Arragon. Instead of going straight to Cuença, we threaded the defiles of the mountains overhanging that town, and arrived, by ways with which my guide was well acquainted, at a grotto looking very much like a hermitage. In fact, it was the very place whither you came yesterday evening to petition me for an asylum.

While I was reconnoitring the neighborhood, which presented a most delicious landscape to my view, my companion said to me, It is six years since I travelled this way. At that time the grotto before us afforded a retreat to an old hermit who entertained me charitably. He made me fare as he did. I remember that he was a holy man, and talked in such a strain as almost to wean me from the vices and follies of this nether world. He may possibly be still living; I will ascertain whether it be so or not. With these words in his mouth, Ambrose, under the influence of natural curiosity, alighted from his

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mule, and went into the hermitage. He remained there some minutes, and then returned, calling after me, and saying, Come hither, Don Raphael; come and bear witness to a most affecting event. I dismounted immediately. We tied our mules to a tree, and I followed Lamela into the grotto, where I descried an old anchoret stretched at his length upon a couch, pale and at the point of death. A white beard, very thick, hung down to his middle, and he held a large rosary, most piously ornamented, in his clasped hands. At the noise which we made in coming near him, he opened his eyes, upon which death had already begun to lay his leaden hand, and after having looked at us for a moment, said, "Whosoever you are, my brethren, profit by the spectacle which presents itself to your observation. I have seen out forty years in the world, and sixty in this solitude. But mark! At this eternal crisis, the time I have devoted to my pleasures seems an age, and that, on the contrary, which has been sacred to repentance, but a minute! Alas! I fear lest the austerities of brother Juan should be found light in the balance with the sins of the licentiate Don Juan de Solis."

No sooner were these words out of his mouth than he breathed his last. We were struck by the solemn scene. Objects of this kind always make some impression even on the greatest libertines; but our serious thoughts were of no long duration. We soon forgot what he had been saying to us, and began making an inventory of what the hermitage con-

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tained; an employment which was not oppressively laborious, since the household furniture extended no further than what you remarked in the grotto. Brother Juan was not only in ill-furnished lodgings; his kitchen, too, was in a very rustic plight. All the store laid in consisted of some small nuts and some pieces of crusty barley bread as hard as flint; which had all the appearance of having been impregnable to the gums of the venerable man. I specify his gums, because we looked for his teeth, and found they had all dropped out. The whole arrangement of this solitary abode, every object that met our eyes, made us look upon this good anchoret as a pattern of sanctity. One thing only staggered us in our opinion. We opened a paper folded in the form of a letter, and lying upon the table, wherein he besought the person who should read the contents to carry his rosary and sandals to the bishop of Cuença. We could not make out in what spirit this modern recluse of the desert could aim at making such a present to his bishop. It seemed to us to tread somewhat on the heels of his humility, and to savor of one who was a candidate for a niche in the calendar. Though indeed it might be that there was nothing in it but a simple supposition that the bishop was such another as himself; but whether his ignorance was really so extreme, I shall not pretend to decide.

In talking over this subject, a very pleasant idea occurred to Lamela. Let us take up our abode, said he, in this holy retreat. The disguise of hermits

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will become us. Brother Juan must be laid quietly in the earth. You shall personate him; and for myself, in the character of brother Anthony, I will go and see what is to be done in the neighboring towns and villages. Besides that we shall be too cunningly ensconced for the prying curiosity of the corregidor, since it is not to be supposed that he will think of coming hither to look for us, I have some good connections at Cuença, which may be of essential service to us. I fell in with this odd whim, not so much for the reasons given me by Ambrose, as in compliance with the humor of the thing, and as it were to play a part in a dramatic piece. We made an excavation in the ground at about thirty or forty yards from the grotto, and buried the old anchoret there without any pompous rites, after having stripped him of his wardrobe, which consisted of a single gown tied round the middle with a leathern girdle. We likewise despoiled him of his beard to make me an artificial one; and finally, after his interment, we took possession of the hermitage.

The first day our table was but meanly served; the provisions of the deceased were all we had to feed on: but on the following morning, before sunrise, Lamela set off to sell the two mules at Toralva, and returned in the evening, laden with provisions and other articles which he had purchased. He brought every thing necessary to metamorphose us completely. For himself he had provided a gown of coarse dark cloth, and a little red horse-hair beard, so ingeniously appended to his ears, that one

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would have sworn it had been natural. There is not a cleverer fellow in the universe for a frolic. Brother Juan's beard was also new-modelled, and adapted to the plumpness of my face. My brown woollen cap completed the masquerade. In fact, nothing was wanting to make us pass for what we were not. Our equipage was so ludicrously out of character, that we could not look at one another without laughing, under a garb so diametrically at variance with our general complexion. With brother Juan's mantle, I caught and kept his rosary and sandals; taking the liberty of borrowing them for the time being from the bishop of Cuença.

We had already been three days in the hermitage, without having been interrupted by a living soul; but on the fourth, two countrymen came into the grotto. They brought bread, cheese, and onions, for the deceased, whom they supposed to be still living. I threw myself on our miserable couch as soon as they made their appearance; and it was not difficult to impose on them. Besides that it was too dark to distinguish my features accurately, I imitated the voice of brother Juan, whose last words I had heard, to the best of my ability. They had no suspicion of the trick, though a good deal surprised at finding another hermit there. Lamela, taking advantage of their stupid wonder, said, in a canting tone, My brethren, be not astonished at seeing me in this solitude. I have quitted a hermitage of my own in Arragon, to come hither and be a companion to the venerable and edifying brother Juan, who, at

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his advanced age, wants a yoke-fellow to administer to his necessities. The rustics lavished their clumsy panegyrics on the charity of Ambrose, and congratulated themselves that they might triumph over their neighbors, and boast of two holy personages residing in their country.

Lamela, laden with a large wallet which he had not forgotten among the number of his purchases, went for the first time to reconnoitre the town of Cuença, which is but a very short distance from the hermitage. With a mortified exterior, by which nature had dubbed him for a cheat, and the art of making that natural deception go as far as possible by a most hypocritical and factitious array of features, he could not fail to play upon the feelings of the charitable and humane, and those whom heaven has blessed with affluence. His knapsack bore testimony to the extravagance of their pious liberalities. Master Ambrose, said I on his return, I congratulate you on your happy knack at softening the souls of all good Christians. As we hope to be saved, one would suppose that you had been a mendicant friar among the Capuchins. I have done something else besides bringing in food for the convent, answered he. You must know that I have ferreted out a certain lass called Barbara, with whom I used to flirt formerly. She is as much altered as any of us; for she also has addicted herself to a godly life. She forms a coterie with two or three other sanctified dames, who are an example to the faithful in public, and flounce over head and

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ears in every sort of private vice. She did not know me again at first. What then, Mistress Barbara, said I, is it possible that you should have discharged one of your oldest friends from your remembrance, your servant Ambrose? As I am a true Christian, Signor de Lamela, exclaimed she, I never thought to have turned you up in such a garb as that. By what transformation are you become a hermit? That is more than I can tell you just now, rejoined I. The particulars are rather long; but I will come to-morrow evening and satisfy your curiosity. Nay, more; I will bring brother Juan, my companion, along with me. Brother Juan, interrupted she, the venerable hermit who has taken up his saintly residence near this town? You do not know what you are saying; he is supposed to be more than a hundred years old. It is very true, said I, that he was of that age some little while ago; but time, in deference to his sanctity, has gone backward with him; and he is grown considerably younger within these few days. He is at present just about my turn of life. Say you so! Then let us have him too, replied Barbara. I perceive there is something more in this mystery than the church will be able to explain.

We did not miss our appointment with these whited sepulchres on the following night. To make our reception the more agreeable, they had laid out a sumptuous entertainment. Off went our beards and cowls, and vestments of mortification; and without any squeamishness we confessed our birth, educa-

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tion, and real character, to these sisters in hypocrisy. On their part, for fear of being behindhand with us in freedom from prejudice, they fairly let us see of what pretended religionists are capable, when they drop the veil of the sanctuary, and exhibit their unmanufactured faces. We spent almost the whole night at table, and got back to our grotto but a moment before daybreak. We were not long in repeating our visit; or, if the truth must be told, it was nightly for three months; till we had ate up more than two thirds of our ways and means in the company of these delicate creatures. But an unsuccessful candidate for their favor got wind of our proceedings, and prated of our whereabout in the ear of justice, which was to have been in motion towards the hermitage this very day, to lay hold of our persons. Yesterday Ambrose, while picking up eleemosynaries at Cuença, stumbled upon one of our whining sisterhood, who gave him a note, with this caution: A female friend of mine has written me this letter, which I was going to send to you by a man on purpose. Show it to brother Juan, and regulate your proceedings accordingly. It was this very note, gentlemen, that Lamela gave me in your presence, which occasioned us to take so abrupt a leave of our solitary dwelling.

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CHAPTER II.

DON RAPHAEL'S CONSULTATION WITH HIS COMPANY, AND THEIR ADVENTURES AS THEY WERE PREPARING TO LEAVE THE WOOD.

When Don Raphael had finished the narrative of his adventurous life, which, with all the other qualities of a romance, had the tediousness, Don Alphonso, according to the laws of good breeding, swore himself black in the face that he had been prodigiously entertained. After the usual exchange of compliments, Signor Ambrose put in his oar, with an admonitory hint to the partner of his exploits and peregrinations. Consider, Don Raphael, that the sun is setting. It would not be amiss, methinks, to take counsel on what we are to do. You are in the right, answered his comrade; we must determine on the place of our destination. For my own part, replied Lamela, I am of opinion that we should get upon the road again without loss of time, reach Requena to-night, and enter upon the territory of Valencia to-morrow, where we will go to work full tilt at our old trade. I have some prognosticating twitches, which tell me that we shall strike some good strokes in that quarter. His colleague, from ample experience of his infallibility in such prophecies, voted on his side of the question. As for Don Alphonso and myself, having nothing to do but to follow the lead of these two worthy gentlemen, we waited, in silent acquiescence, the issue of this momentous debate.

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Thus it was determined that we should take the direction of Requena; and all hands were piped to make the necessary arrangements. We made our meal after the same fashion as in the morning, and the horse was laden with the bottle, and with the remnant of our provisions. After a time, the approach of night seemed to promise us that darkness so friendly, and even so necessary to the safety of our retreat; and we were beginning our march through the wood; but before we had gone a hundred paces, a light among the trees gave us a subject of anxious speculation. What can be the meaning of that? said Don Raphael; these surely must be bloodhounds of the police from Cuença, uncoupled and eager for the sport, with a fresh scent of us in this forest, and in full cry after their game. I am of a very different opinion, said Ambrose; they are more likely to be benighted travellers taking shelter in the thicket till daybreak. But there is no trusting to conjecture; I will examine into the real truth. Stay you here, all three of you; I will be back again instantly. No sooner said than done; he stole, just as if he had been used to it, towards the light, which was not far off; no brute or human thief of forest or city could have done it better. With a gentle removal of the leaves and branches which obstructed his passage, the whole scene was laid open to his silent contemplation; and it afforded sufficient food. On the grass, round about a lighted candle with a clod for its candlestick, were seated four men, just finishing a meat pie, and hugging a pretty large

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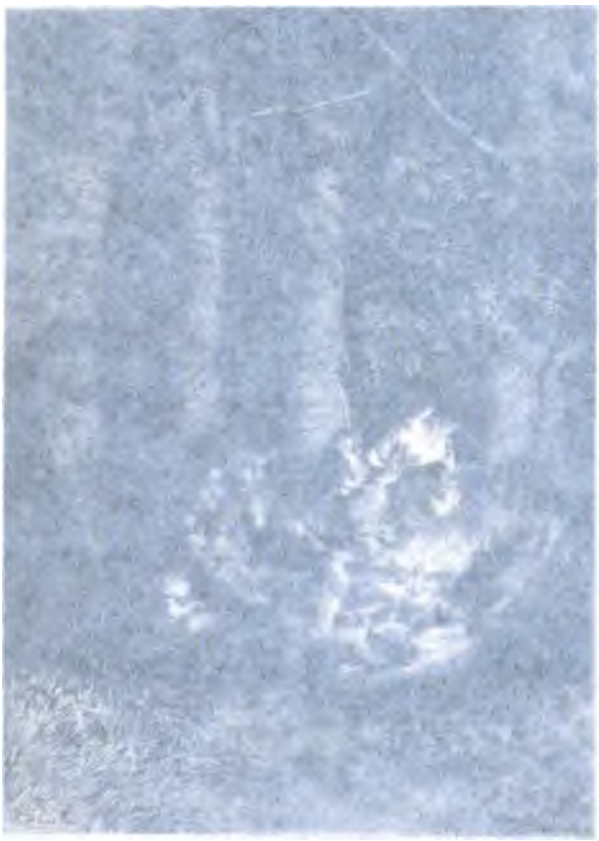

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bottle, which was at its last gasp, after having sustained their alternate embraces for successive rounds. At some paces from these gentry, he espied a lady and gentleman tied to the trees, and, a little farther off, a carriage with two mules richly caparisoned. He determined at once in his own mind that the fellows carousing on the ground were banditti; and the tenor of their talk assured him that he had not belied their trade by his conjecture. The four cutthroats all avowed a like desire of possessing the female who had fallen into their hands; and they were proposing to draw lots for her. Lamela, having made himself master of the business, came back to us, and gave an exact account of all he had seen and heard.

My friends, said Don Alphonso on his recital, that lady and gentleman, whom the robbers have tied to trees, are probably persons of the first condition. Shall we suffer scoundrels like these to triumph over their honor and take away their lives? Put yourselves under my direction: let us assail the desperate outlaws, and they will perish under our attack. With all my heart, said Don Raphael. It is all one to me. I had just as soon engage on the right side as on the wrong. Ambrose, for his part, protested that he wished for nothing better than to lend a hand in so moral an enterprise, as it promised to combine much profit with some share of honor. And indeed, if a man may speak a good word for himself, danger stood better recommended than usual to my comprehension; all the boiling courage of knighthood,

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pledged up to the knuckles or the chin on the behalf of female innocence, was oozing out at every pore of this chivalrous person. But, if we are to state facts in the spirit of history rather than of romance, the danger was more in imagination than in reality. Lamela having brought us word that the arms of the robbers were all piled up at the distance of ten or twelve paces out of their reach, there was no difficulty in securing the mastery of the field. We tied our horses to a tree, and drew near, as softly as possible, to the spot were the robbers were seated. They were debating with some impetuosity, and their vociferous argument was all in favor of our covert attack. We got possession of their arms before they had any suspicion of us. But the enemy was nearer than they imagined—too near to miss aim; and they were all stretched lifeless on the ground.

During the conflict the candle went out, so that we proceeded in our business by guess-work. We were not remiss, however, in unbinding the prisoners, of whom fear had got such complete possession, that they had not their wits enough about them to thank us for what we had done for them. It must be allowed that they could not at first distinguish whether they were to consider us as their deliverers, or as a fresh gang who had taken them out of one furnace to cast them hissing into another. But we recovered their spirits by the assurance that we should lodge them safely in a public house which Ambrose mentioned as not being more than half a mile off, whence they might take all necessary meas-

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ures to pursue their journey in whatever direction they thought proper. After these words of comfort, which seemed to sink deep, we placed them in their carriage, and conducted them out of the wood, holding their mules by the bridle. Our clerical friends instituted a ghostly visitation to the pockets of the vanquished banditti. Our next step was to recover Don Alphonso's horse. We also took to ourselves the steeds of the robbers, waiting, as they were, to be released from the trees to which they were tied near the field of battle. With this extensive cavalcade we followed brother Antony, mounted on one of the mules, and conducting the carriage to the inn, whither we did not arrive in less than two hours, though he had pledged his credit that the distance from the wood was very short.

We knocked roughly at the door. Every living creature was napping, except the fleas. The landlord and landlady got on their clothes in a hurry, and were not at all annoyed at finding their rest disturbed by the arrival of an equipage which promised to do more for the good of the house than it eventually did. The whole inn was lighted up in an instant. Don Alphonso and the stage-bred son of Lucinda lent their assistance to the gentleman and lady in alighting from the carriage, and acted as their ushers in leading the way to the room prepared for them by the landlord. Compliments flew backwards and forwards like shuttlecocks; but we were not a little astonished at discovering the Count de Polan himself and his daughter Seraphina

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in the persons we had just rescued. It would be difficult to represent by words the surprise of that lady, as well as of Don Alphonso, when they recognized each other's features. The count took no notice of it, his attention being engrossed by other matters. He set about relating to us in what manner the robbers had attacked him, and how they secured his daughter and himself, after having killed his postilion, a page, and a valet-de-chambre. He ended with declaring how deeply he felt his obligation, and that, if we would call upon him at Toledo, where he should be in a month, we should judge for ourselves whether he felt as a grateful heart ought to feel.

His lordship's daughter was not backward in her acknowledgments for her timely rescue; and as we were of opinion—that is, Raphael and myself—that we should do a good turn to Don Alphonso by giving him an opportunity of a minute's private parley with the young widow, we contrived to keep the Count de Polan in play. Lovely Seraphina, said Don Alphonso to the lady in a low voice, I no longer lament over the lot which obliges me to live like a man banished from civil society, since I have been so fortunate as to assist in the important service just rendered you. What then, answered she, with a sigh, is it you who have saved my life and honor? Is it to you that we are so indebted, myself equally with my father? Ah! Don Alphonso, why were you the instrument of my brother's death?

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She said no more upon the subject; but he conceived clearly by these words, and by the tone in which they were pronounced, that if he was over head and ears in love with Seraphina, she was equally out of her depth in the same passion.

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BOOK THE SIXTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATE OF GIL BLAS AND HIS COMPANIONS AFTER THEY TOOK LEAVE OF THE COUNT DE POLAN. ONE OF AMBROSE'S NOTABLE CONTRIVANCES SET OFF BY THE MANNER OF ITS EXECUTION.

THE Count de Polan, after having exhausted half the night in thanking us, and protesting that we might reckon upon his substantial acknowledgments, sent for the landlord, to consult him on the best method of getting safely to Turis, whither it was his intention to go. We had nothing to do with this nobleman's further progress, and therefore left him to take his own measures. Our departure from the inn was now resolved on; and we followed Lamela like sheep after the bell-wether.

After two hours' travelling, the day overtook us near Campillo. We made as expeditiously as possible for the mountains between that hamlet and Requena. There we wore out the day in taking our rest and reckoning up our stock, which the spoil of the robbers had considerably replenished, to the amount of more than three hundred pistoles, the lawful ravage of their pockets. We began our march again with the setting in of the night, and on

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the following morning reached the frontier of Valencia in safety. We got quietly into the first wood that offered as a shelter. The inmost recesses of it were best suited to our purpose, and led us on by winding paths to a spot where a rivulet of transparent water was meandering in its slow and silent course, to incorporate with the waters of Guadalaviar. The refreshing shade afforded by the foliage, and the rich pasturage in which our toil-worn beasts so much delighted, would have fixed this for the place of our halting, if our resolution had not been previously taken to that effect.

We therefore alighted, and were preparing to pass the day very pleasantly; but a good breakfast was amongst the foremost of our intended pleasures, and we found that there was very little ammunition left. Bread was beginning to be a nonentity; and our bottle was becoming an evidence of the material system, mere carnal leather without a vivifying soul. Gentlemen, said Ambrose, scenery and the picturesque have but hungry charms for me, unless Bacchus and Ceres preside over the landscape. Our provisions must be lengthened out. For this purpose, away post I to Xelva. It is a very pretty town, not more than two leagues off. I shall soon make this little excursion. Speaking after this manner he slung the bottle and the wallet over a horse's back, leaped merrily into his seat, and shot out of the wood with a rapidity which seemed to bid fair for a speedy return.

He did not, however, come back quite so soon as

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he had given us reason to expect. More than half the day had elapsed; nay, night herself was already pranking up her dun and gloomy wings, to overshadow the thicket with a denser horror, when we saw our purveyor once again, whose long stay was beginning to give us some uneasiness. Our extreme wishes were lame and impotent, compared with the abundance of his stores. He not only produced the bottle, filled with some excellent wine, and the wallet stuffed with game and poultry ready dressed, to say nothing of bread, — the horse was laden besides with a large bundle of stuffs, of which we could make neither head nor tail. He took notice of our wonder, and said with a smile, I will lay a wager neither Don Raphael nor all the colleges of soothsayers upon earth can guess why I have bought these articles. With this fling at our dulness, we untied the bundle, and lectured on the intrinsic value of what we had been considering only as an empty pageant. In the inventory was a cloak and a black gown of trailing dimensions; doublets, breeches, and hose to correspond; an inkstand and writing paper such as a secretary of state need not be ashamed of; a key such as a treasurer might carry; a great seal and green wax such as a chancellor might affix to his decrees. When he had at length exhausted the display of his bargains, Don Raphael observed, in a bantering tone, Faith and troth, Master Ambrose, it must be confessed that you have made a good, sensible speculation. But pray, how do you mean to turn the penny on your

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purchase? Let me alone for that, answered Lamela. All these things cost me only ten pistoles, and it shall go hard but they bring us in above five hundred. The tens in five hundred are fifty; a good improvement of money, my masters! I am not a man to burden myself with a trumpery pedler's pack; and to prove to you that I have not been making ducks and drakes of our joint stock, I will let you into the secret of a plan which has just taken birth in my pericranium.

After having laid in my stock of bread, I went into a cook's shop, where I ordered a range of partridges, chickens, and young rabbits, half a dozen of each, to be put instantly on the spit. While these relishing little articles were roasting, in came a man in a violent passion, open-mouthed against the coarse conduct of a tradesman to his consequential self. This fagot of fury observed to the lord paramount of the dripping-pan, By St. James! Samuel Simon is the most wrong-headed retail dealer in the town of Xelva. He has just insulted me in his own shop before his customers. The skinflint would not trust me for six ells of cloth, though he knows very well that my credit is as good as the bank, and that no one could say he ever lost anything by me. Are not you delighted with the outlandish monster? He has no objection to getting people of fashion on his books. He had rather toss up heads or tails with them, than oblige a plain citizen in an honest way, and be paid in full at the time appointed. What a strange whim! But he is an infernal Jew.

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He will be taken in some day or other! All the merchants on the Exchange are lying in wait to catch him upon the hip; and his disgrace or ruin will be nuts to me.

While this reptile of the warehouse was thus spitting his spite and blurting out many other ill-natured innuendoes, there came over me a sort of astrological anticipation that I should be lord of the ascendant over this Samuel Simon. My friend, said I to the man who was complaining against that hawker of damaged goods, of what character is the strange fellow you are talking about? Of a confoundedly bad character, answered he in a pet. Depend on it, he is one of the most extortionate usurers in existence, though with the affectation of not letting his left hand know what his right gives away in charity. He was a Jew, and has turned Catholic; but rip your way into his heart, if he has any, and you will find him still as inveterate a Jew as ever Pilate was. As for his conversion, it was all in the way of trade.

I took in with greedy ear the whole invective of the shop-keeping declaimant, and failed not, on coming out of the eating-house, to inquire for Samuel Simon's residence. A person directed me to the part of the town, and there was no difficulty in finding out the house. It was not enough to skim my eye cursorily over his shop. I peered into every hole and corner of it; and my imagination, always on the alert when any profit is to be picked up, has already engendered a rogue's trick, which only waits the period of gestation, when it may turn out a bant-

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ling not unworthy to be fathered by the sanctimonious servant of Signor Gil Blas. Straightway went I to the ready-made warehouse, where I bought these dresses, into which we may stuff an inquisitor, a notary, and an alguazil, and play the parts in the spirit of the solemn offices they represent.

Ah! my dear Ambrose, interrupted Don Raphael, transported with rapture at the suggestion, what a wonderful idea! a glorious scheme indeed! I am quite jealous of the contrivance. Willingly would I blot out the proudest quarter from my escutcheon, to have owned an effort of genius so transcendent. Yes, Lamela, I see, my friend, all the rich invention of the design, and you need be at no loss for instruments to carry it into effect. You want two good actors to play up to you; and you have not far to look for them. You have yourself a face that can look sanctified, magisterial, or bloodthirsty at will, and may do very well to represent the inquisition. My character shall be that of the notary; and Signor Gil Blas, if he pleases, may enact the alguazil. Thus are the persons of the drama distributed: tomorrow we will play the piece, and I will pledge myself for its success, bating one of those unlucky chance medleys which turn awry the currents of the most pithy and momentous enterprises.

As yet Don Raphael's masterpiece of roguery had made but a clumsy impression on my plodding brain; but the argument of the fable was developed at supper-time, and the hinge upon which it was turned was, to my mind, of an ingenious contrivance. After

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having despatched part of our game, and bled our bottle to the last stage of evacuation, we stretched our length upon the grass, and soon fell fast asleep. Up with you! up with you! was the alarum of Signor Ambrose, as the day began to dawn. People who have a great enterprise on hand ought not to indulge themselves in indolence. A plague upon you, master inquisitor, said Don Raphael, rubbing his eyes; you are confounded early on the move! It is as good as an order for execution to Master Samuel Simon. Many a true word is spoken in jest, replied Lamela. Nay, you shall know more, added he with a sarcastic grin. I dreamt last night that I was plucking the hairs out of his beard. Was not that a left-handed dream for him, master secretary? These pleasant hits were followed by a thousand others, which called forth new bursts of merriment. Our breakfast passed off with the utmost gayety; and when it was over, we made our arrangements for the pageant we had got up. Ambrose arrayed himself in sables, as befitted so ghostly an instrument for the suppression of vice. We also took to our official habits; nor has the dignity of magistracy been often more gravely represented than by Don Raphael and myself. The making up of our persons was rather a tedious operation; for it was later than two o'clock in the afternoon when we sallied from the wood to attend our call at Xelva. It is true, there was no hurry, since the play was not to begin till the setting in of the evening. That being the case, we jogged on leisurely, and stopped at the gates of the town till the day was closed.

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At that eventful hour, we left our horses where they were, to the care of Don Alphonso, who was very well satisfied to have so humble a cast in the distribution. As for Don Raphael, Ambrose, and myself, our first visit was not to Samuel Simon in person, but to a tavern-keeper who lived very near him. His reverence the inquisitor walked foremost. In went he to the bar, and said gravely to the landlord, Master, I want to speak a word with you in private. The obsequious publican showed us into a room, where Lamela, now that we had got him to ourselves, said, I have the honor to be an unworthy member of the holy office, and am come here on a business of very great importance. At this intimation, the man of liquor turned pale, and answered in a tremulous tone that he was not conscious of having given any umbrage to the holy inquisition. True, replied Ambrose, with encouraging affability; neither do we meditate any harm against you. Heaven forbid that august tribunal, too hasty in its punishments, should make no distinction between guilt and innocence. It is unrelenting, but always just: to become obnoxious to its vengeance, you must have earned its displeasure by wickedness or contumacy. Be satisfied therefore that it is not you who bring me to Xelva, but a certain dealer and chapman, by name Samuel Simon. A very ugly story about him has come round to us. He is still a Jew in his heart, they say, and has only embraced Christianity from sordid and secular motives. I command you, in the name of the tremendous court I represent, to tell

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me all you know about that man. Beware how you are induced by good neighborhood, or possibly by close friendship, to gloss over and palliate his errors; for I warn you authoritatively, if I detect the slightest prevarication in your evidence, you are yourself even as one of the abandoned and accursed. Where is my secretary? pursued he, turning down towards Don Raphael. Sit down and do your duty.

Mr. Secretary, with his paper already in his hand and his pen behind his ear, took his seat most pompously, and made ready to take down the landlord's deposition; who promised solemnly on his part not to suppress one tittle of the real fact. So far, so good! said the worshipful commissioner; we have only to proceed in our examination. You will only just answer my questions; but do not interlard your replies with any comments of your own. Do you often see Samuel Simon at church! I never thought of looking for him, said the drawer of corks; but I do not know that I ever saw him there in my life. Very good! cried the inquisitor. Write down that the defendant never goes to church. I do not say so, your worship, answered the landlord, I only say that I never happened to see him there. We may have been at church together, and yet not have come across each other. My good friend, replied Lamela, you forget that you are deposing to facts, and not arguing. Remember what I told you; contempt of court is a heinous offence. You are to give a sound and discreet evidence; every iota of what makes against him, and not a word in his favor, if you

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knew volumes. If that is your practice, O upright and impartial judge, resumed our host, my testimony will scarcely be worth the trouble of taking. I know nothing about the tradesman you are inquiring after, and therefore can tell neither good nor harm of him; but if you wish to examine into the history of his private life, I will run and call Gaspard, his apprentice, whom you may question as much as you please. The lad comes and takes his glass here sometimes with his friends. Bless us, what a tongue! He will rip up all the minutest actions of his master's life, and find employment for your secretary till his wrist aches, take my word for it.

I like your open dealing, said Ambrose with a nod of approbation. To point out a man so capable of speaking to the bad morals of Simon, is an instance of Christian charity as well as of religious zeal. I shall report you very favorably to the inquisition. Make haste, therefore; go and fetch this Gaspard, of whom you speak; but do the thing cautiously, so that his master may have no suspicion of what is going forward. The multiplier of scores acquitted himself of his commission with due diligence and laudable privacy. Our little shopman came along with him. The youth had a tongue with a tang, and was just the sort of fellow that we wanted. Welcome, my good young man! said Lamela. You behold in me an inquisitor, appointed by that venerable body to collect informations against Samuel Simon, on an accusation of still adhering to Ju-

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daism in his secret devotions. You are an inmate of his family; consequently you must be an eye-witness to many of his most private transactions. It probably may be unnecessary to warn you, that you are obliged in conscience, and by fear of punishment, to declare all you know about him, notwithstanding any promise to the contrary, when I order you so to do on the part of the holy inquisition. May it please your reverence, answered the plodding little rascal, I am quite ready to satisfy your heart's desire on that head, without being commanded thereto in the name of the holy office. If ever my acquittal was to depend on my master's character of me, I am persuaded that my chance would be a sorry one; and for that reason, I shall serve him as he would serve me. And I may tell you in the first place, that he is a fly-by-night whose proceedings it is no easy matter to take measure of; a man who puts on all the starch formalities of an inveterate religionist, but at bottom has not a spark of principle in his composition. He goes every evening dangling after a little girl no better than she should be. . . . I am vastly glad indeed to find that, interrupted Ambrose, because I plainly perceive, by all you have been telling me, that he is a man of corrupt morals and licentious practices. But answer point by point to the questions I shall put to you. It is above all on the subject of religion that I am commissioned to inquire into his sentiments and conduct. Pray tell me, do you eat much pork at your house? I do not think, answered Gaspard, that we have seen it at

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table twice in the year that I have lived with him. Better and better! replied the paragon of inquisitors: write down in legible characters that they never eat pork in Samuel Simon's family. But as a set-off against that, doubtless a joint of lamb is served up every now and then? Yes, every now and then, rejoined the apprentice; we killed one for our own consumption about last Easter. The season is pat and to the purpose, cried the ecclesiastical commissioner. Come, write down, that Simon keeps the passover. This goes on merrily to a complete conviction; and it seems we have got a good serviceable information here.

Tell me again, my friend, pursued Lamela, whether you have not often seen your master fondle young children. A thousand times, answered Gaspard. When he sees the little urchins playing about before the shop, if they happen to be pretty, he calls them in and makes much of them. Write that down, be sure you write that down! interrupted the inquisitor. Samuel Simon is very grievously suspected of lying in wait for Christian children, and enticing them into his den to circumcise them. Vastly well! vastly well, indeed, Master Simon! you will have an account to settle with the society for the suppression of Judaism, take my word for it. Do not take it into your savage head that such bloody sacrifices are to be perpetrated with impunity. A pretty use you make of baptism and shaving! Cheer up, religious Gaspard, thou foremost of elect apprentices! Make a full confession of all thy master's sins; com-

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plete thine honest testimony by telling us how this simular of a Catholic is more than ever wedded to his Jewish customs and ceremonies. Is it not a fact that one day in the week he sits with his hands before him, and will not even perform the most necessary offices for himself? No, answered Gaspard, I have not exactly observed that. What comes nearest to it is, that on some days he shuts himself up in his closet, and stays there a long time. Ay! now we have it, exclaimed the commissary. He keeps the Sabbath, or I am not an inquisitor. Note that particularly, officer; note that he observes the fast of the Sabbath most superstitiously! Out upon him! What a shocking fellow! One question more, and his business is done. Is not he always parleying about Jerusalem? Pretty often indeed, replied our informer. He knows the Old Testament by heart, and tells us how the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. The very thing! resumed Ambrose. Secretary! be sure you do not neglect that feature of the case. Write, in letters of an inch long, that Samuel Simon has contracted with the devil for the rebuilding of the temple, and that he is plotting day and night for the reëstablishment of his nation. That is all I want to know; and it is labor in vain to pursue the examination any further. What Gaspard, in the spirit of truth and charity, has deposed, would be sufficient to make a bonfire of all Jewry.

When the august mouth-piece of the holy tribunal had sifted the little scoundrelly apprentice after this manner, he told him he might go about his business;

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at the same time commanding him, under the severest penalties of the inquisition, not to say a word to his master about what was going forward. Gaspard promised implicit obedience, and marched off. We were not long in coming after him; our procession from the inn was as grave and solemn as our pilgrimage thereunto, till we knocked at Samuel Simon's door. He opened it in person. Three figures such as ours might have dumfounded a better man; but his face was as long as a lawsuit, when Lamela, our spokesman, said to him in a tone of authority, Master Samuel, I command you in the name of the holy inquisition, whose delegate I have the honor to be, to give me the key of your closet without murmur or delay. I want to see if I cannot find wherewithal to corroborate certain hints which have been communicated to us respecting you.

The son of commerce, aghast at these sounds of melancholy import, reeled two steps backward, just as if some one had given him a blow in the bread-basket. Far from smelling a rat in this pleasant trick of ours, he fancied in good earnest that some secret enemy had made him an object of suspicion to the holy hue-and-cry; and it might possibly have happened that, from being rather clumsy at his new duties as a Christian, he might be conscious of having laid himself open to serious animadversion. However that might be, I never saw a man look more foolish. He did as he was ordered without saying nay, and opened all his lock-up places with the sheepish acquiescence of a man who stood in

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awe of an ecclesiastical rap on the knuckles. At least, said Ambrose as he went in, at least you are not a contumacious oppugner of our resistless mandates. But withdraw into another room, and leave me to fulfil the duties of my station without profane observers. Samuel did not set his face against this command any more than against the first, but kept himself quiet in his shop, while we went all three of us into his closet, where, without loss of time, we laid an embargo on his cash. It was no difficult matter to find it, for it lay in an open coffer, and in much larger quantity than we could carry away. There were a great many bags heaped up, but all in silver. Gold would have been more to our mind; but, as robbers must not be choosers any more than beggars, we were obliged to yield to the necessity of the case. Not only did we line our pockets with ducats, but the most unsearchable parts of our dress were made the receptacles of our filchings. Yet was there no outward show of the heavy burden under which we tottered; thanks to the cunning contrivance of Ambrose and Don Raphael, who proved that there is nothing like being master of one's trade.

We marched out of the closet, after having feathered our nests pretty warmly; and then, for a reason which the reader will have no great difficulty in guessing, the worshipful inquisitor produced his padlock, and fixed it on the door with his own hands, — he affixed moreover his own seal, — and then said to Simon, Master Samuel, I forbid you, in

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the name of the holy inquisition, to touch either this padlock or this seal, which it is your bounden duty to hold sacred, since it is the authentic seal of our holy office. I shall return hither this time to-morrow, then and here to open my commission, and provisionally to take off the interdict. With this injunction, he ordered the street door to be opened, and we made our escape after the processional manner, out of our wits with joy. As soon as we had marched about fifty yards, we began to mend our pace into such a quick step, aggravated by degrees into a leap and a bound, that we were almost like vaulters and tumblers, in spite of the weight we carried. We were soon out of town, and mounting our horses once more, pushed forward towards Segorba, with many a pious ejaculation to the god Mercury, on the happy issue of so bold an attempt.

CHAPTER II.

THE DETERMINATION OF DON ALPHONSO AND GIL BLAS AFTER THIS ADVENTURE.

We travelled all night, according to our modest and unobtrusive custom, so that we found ourselves, at sunrise, near a little village two leagues from Segorba. As we were all tired to death, it was agreed, unanimously, to strike out of the highway, and rest under the shade of some willows, which we

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saw at the foot of a little hill, about ten or twelve hundred yards from the village, where it did not seem expedient for us to halt. These willows furnished us with an agreeable retreat, by the side of a little brook which bubbled as it washed their roots. The place struck our fancy, and we resolved to pass the day there. We unbridled our horses, and turned them out to grass, stretching our own gentle limbs on the soft sod. There we courted the drowsy god of innocent repose for a while, and then rummaged to the bottom of our wallet and our wine-skin. After an ecclesiastical breakfast, we counted up our ten tithes of Samuel Simon's money, and it mounted to a round three thousand ducats. So that, with such a sum and what we had before, it might be said without boasting that we knew how to make both ends meet.

As it was necessary to go to market, Ambrose and Don Raphael, throwing off their dresses now the play was over, said that they would take that office conjointly on themselves: the adventure at Xelva had only sharpened their wit, and they had a mind to look about Segorba, just to make the experiment whether any opportunity might offer of striking another stroke. You have nothing to do, added the heir of Lucinda's wit and wisdom, but to wait for us under these willows; we shall not be long before we are with you again. Signor Don Raphael, exclaimed I with a horse-laugh, tell us rather to wait for you under a more substantial tree — the gallows. If you once leave us, we are in a month's mind that we

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shall not see you again till the day after the fair. This suspicion of our honor goes against the grain, replied Signor Ambrose; but we deserve that our characters should suffer in your esteem. It is but reason that you should distrust our purity, after the affair at Valladolid, and should fancy that we shall make it no more a matter of conscience to play at the devil take the hindmost with you, than with the party that we left in the lurch in that town. Yet you deceive yourselves egregiously. The gang upon whom we turned the tables were people of very bad character, and their company began to be disreputable to us. Thus far justice must be done to the members of our profession, that there is no bond in all civilized life less liable to be broken by personal and private interest; but when there are no feelings in common, our good understanding will be the worse for wear, as it happens among other descriptions of men. Wherefore, Signor Gil Blas, I entreat you, and Signor Don Alphonso as well as you, to be somewhat more liberal in your construction of us, and to set your hearts at ease respecting Don Raphael's and my whim about going to Segorba.

It is the easiest thing in the world, observed Lucinda's hopeful brat, to quash all subject of uneasiness on that score; they have only to remain treasurers of the exchequer, and they will have a sufficient pledge in their hands for our return. You see, Signor Gil Blas, that we are all fair and above board. You shall both hold security for our reäppearance, and you may rest assured that for Ambrose

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and myself, we shall set off without the slightest misgiving of your taking to your heels with so valuable a deposit. After so substantial a proof of our good faith, will you not place implicit confidence in us? Yes, gentlemen, said I, and you may do at once whatever seems good in your own eyes. They took their departure immediately, carrying the bottle and the wallet along with them, and left me under the willows with Don Alphonso, who said to me, after they were out of sight, Now is the time, Signor Gil Blas, now is the time to open my heart to you. I am angry with myself for having been so easily prevailed on to herd thus far with these two knaves. You have no idea how many times I have quarrelled with myself on that score. Yesterday evening, while I was watching the horses, a thousand mortifying reflections rushed upon my mind. I thought it did not become a young man of honorable principles to live among such scurvy fellows as Don Raphael and Lamela; that if by ill luck, some day or other, — and many a more unlikely thing has happened, — the success of our swindling tricks should throw us into the hands of justice, I might sustain the shame of being tried with them as a reputed thief, and undergoing the disgraceful sentence of the law. These frightful thoughts present themselves incessantly to my imagination, and I will own to you that I have determined, as the only means of escape from the contamination of their bad actions, to part from them forever. I can scarcely suppose that you will disapprove of my design. No, I promise you, answered

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I; though you have seen me perform the part of the alguazil in Samuel Simon's comedy, do not fancy that such pieces as those are got up to my taste. I take heaven to witness that while acting in so witty a scene, I said to myself, Faith and troth, Master Gil Blas, if justice should come and lay hold of you by the weasand at this moment, you would well deserve the penitential wages of your iniquity. I feel therefore no more disposed than yourself, Don Alphonso, to tarry longer in such bad company; and if you think well of it, I will bear you company. When these gentlemen come back, we will demand a balancing of the accounts, and to-morrow morning, or even to-night before to-morrow, we will make our bow to them.

The lovely Seraphina's lover approved my proposal. Let us get to Valencia, said he, and we will embark for Italy, where we shall be able to enter into the service of the Venetian republic. Will it not be far better to take up the profession of arms, than to lead such a dastardly and disreputable life as we are now engaged in? We shall even be in a condition to make a very handsome figure with the money that will be coming to us. Not that I appropriate to myself without remorse a fund so unfairly established; but besides that necessity obliges me to it, if ever I acquire any property in my campaigns, I make a vow to indemnify Samuel Simon. I gave Don Alphonso to understand that my sentiments coincided with his own, and we resolved at once to separate ourselves from our com-

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panions on the following morning before daybreak. We were above the temptation of profiting by their absence, that is, of marching off in a hurry with the sum total of the finances; the confidence they had reposed in leaving us masters of the whole revenue did not permit such a thought so much as to pass through our minds.

Ambrose and Don Raphael returned from Segorba just at the close of day. The first thing they told us was, that their journey had been propitious, for they had laid the corner-stone of a rascality which, to all appearance, would turn out still better than that of the evening before. And thereupon the son of Lucinda was going to put us in possession of the details; but Don Alphonso cut him short in his explanation, and declared at once his intention of parting company. I announced my own wish to do the same. To no purpose did they employ all their rhetoric to prove to us the propriety of our accompanying them in their professional travels; we took leave of them the next morning, after having made an equal division of our cash, and pushed on towards Valencia.

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CHAPTER III.

AN UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE, WHICH TERMINATED TO THE HIGH DELIGHT OF DON ALPHONSO. GIL BLAS MEETS WITH AN ADVENTURE WHICH PLACES HIM ALL AT ONCE IN A VERY SUPERIOR SITUATION.

We galloped on gayly as far as Bunol, where, as ill luck would have it, we were obliged to stop. Don Alphonso was taken ill. His disorder was a high fever, with such an access of alarming symptoms as put me in fear for his life. By the greatest mercy in the world, the place was not beset by a single physician, and I got clear off without any harm but my fright. He was quite out of danger at the end of three days, and with my nursing, his recovery was rapid and without relapse. He seemed to be very grateful for my attentions; and as we really and truly felt a liking for each other, we swore an eternal friendship.

At length we got on our journey again, in the constant determination, when we arrived at Valencia, of profiting by the first opportunity which might offer to go over into Italy. But heaven disposed of us differently. We saw at the gate of a fine castle some country people of both sexes making merry and dancing in a ring. We went near to be spectators of their revels; and Don Alphonso was never less prepared than for the surprise which all at once came over his senses. He found it was Baron

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Steinbach, who was as little backward in recognizing him, but ran up to him with open arms, and exclaimed, in accents of unbridled joy, Ah, Don Alphonso! is it you? What a delightful meeting! While search was making for you in every direction, chance presents you to my view.

My fellow-traveller dismounted immediately, and ran to embrace the baron, whose joy seemed to me of an extravagant nature. Come, my long-lost son, said the good old man; you shall now be informed of your own birth, and know the happy destiny that awaits you. As he uttered these words, he conducted him into the castle. I went in along with them, for while they were exchanging salutations, I had alighted and tied our horses to a tree. The lord of the castle was the first person whom we met. He was about the age of fifty, and a very well-looking man. Sir, said Baron Steinbach, as he introduced Don Alphonso, behold your son. At these words, Don Cæsar da Leyva—for by that title the lord of the castle was called—threw his arms round Don Alphonso's neck, and weeping with joy, muttered indistinctly, My dear son, know in me the author of your being. If I have for so long left you in ignorance of your birth and family, rest assured that the self-denial was mine in the most painful degree. I have a thousand times been ready to burst with anxiety, but it was impossible to act otherwise. I had married your mother from sheer attachment, for her origin was very inferior to mine. I lived under the control of an austere father, whose severity

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rendered it necessary to keep secret a marriage contracted without his sanction. Baron Steinbach, and he alone, was in my confidence; he brought you up at my request, and under my directions. At length my father is laid with his ancestors, and I can own you for my son and heir. This is not all; I can give you for a bride a young lady whose rank is on a level with my own. Sir, interrupted Don Alphonso, make me not pay too dear for the happiness you have just been throwing in my lap. May I not be told that I have the honor of being your son without being informed at the same time that you are determined to make me miserable? Ah, sir! be not more cruel than your own father. If he did not consent to the indulgence of your passion, at least he never compelled you to take another wife. My son, replied Don Cæsar, I have no wish to exercise a tyranny over your inclinations which I spurned at in my own case. But have the good manners just to see the lady I design for you; that is all I require from your filial duty. Though a lovely creature and a very advantageous match, I promise never to force you into marriage. She is now in this castle. Follow me; you will be obliged to acknowledge that you have rarely seen a more attractive object. So saying, he led Don Alphonso into a room where I made myself one of the party with Baron Steinbach.

There was the Count de Polan with his two daughters, Seraphina and Julia, and Don Ferdinand de Leyva, his son-in-law, who was Don Cæsar's nephew. Don Ferdinand, as was mentioned before,

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had eloped with Julia, and it was on the occasion of the marriage between these two lovers that the peasantry of the neighborhood were collected on this day to congratulate the bride and bridegroom. As soon as Don Alphonso made his appearance, and his father had introduced him to the company, the Count de Polan rose from his chair and ran to embrace him, saying, Welcome, my deliverer! Don Alphonso, added he, addressing his discourse to him, observe the power of virtue over generous minds. Though you have killed my son, you saved my life. I lay aside my resentment forever, and give you that very Seraphina whose honor you protected from invasion. In so doing, my debt to you is paid. Don Cæsar's son was not wanting in acknowledgments to the Count de Polan, nor could he be otherwise than deeply affected by his goodness; and it may be doubted whether the discovery of his birth and parentage touched his felicity more nearly than the intelligence that he was the destined husband of Seraphina. This marriage was actually solemnized some days afterwards, to the entire satisfaction of all parties concerned.

As I was one of the Count de Polan's deliverers, this nobleman, who knew me again immediately, said that he would take upon himself the care of making my fortune. I thanked him for his liberality, but would not leave Don Alphonso, who made me steward of his household, and honored me with his confidence. A few days after his marriage, still harping upon the trick which had been played to

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Samuel Simon, he sent me to return to that cozened shopkeeper all the money which had been filched from him. I went therefore to make restitution. This was setting up the trade of a steward, but beginning at the wrong end: they ought all of them to end with restitution; but nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand think it double trouble, and excuse themselves.

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BOOK THE SEVENTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE TENDER ATTACHMENT BETWEEN GIL BLAS AND DAME LORENZA SEPHORA.

AWAY went I to Xelva with three thousand ducats under my charge, as an equivalent to Samuel Simon for the amount of his loss. I will have the honesty to own that my fingers itched, as I jogged along, to transfer these funds to my own account, and begin my stewardship in character, since everything in this life depends upon setting out well. There was no risk in preferring instinct to principle, because it was only to ride about the country for five or six days, and come home upon a brisk trot, as if I had done my business and made the best of my way. Don Alphonso and his father would never have believed me capable of a breach of trust. Yet, strange to tell, I was proof against so tempting a suggestion; it would scarcely be too much to say, that honor, not the fear of being found out, was the spring of so praiseworthy a decision; and as times go, that is saying a great deal for a lad whose conscience had been pretty well seasoned by keeping company with a long succession of scoundrels. Many people who

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have not that excuse, but frequent worshipful society, will wonder how such squeamishness should have prevailed over my good sense: treasurers of charities in particular; persons who have the wills of relations in their custody, and do not exactly like the contents; in short, all those whose characters stand higher than their principles, will find food for reflection in my overstrained scrupulosity.

After having made restitution to the merchant, who little thought ever to have seen one farthing of his property again, I returned to the castle of Leyva. The Count de Polan had taken his departure, and was far on his journey to Toledo with Julia and Don Ferdinand. I found my new master more wrapped up than ever in Seraphina; his Seraphina equally wrapped up in my master, and Don Cæsar just as much wrapped up as either in the contemplation of the happy couple. My object was to gain the good will of this affectionate father, and I succeeded to my wish. The whole house was placed implicitly under my superintendence — nothing was done without my special direction; the tenants paid their rents into my hands; the disbursements of the family were all under my revision; and the subordinate situations in the household were at my disposal without appeal; and yet the power of tyrannizing did not give me the inclination, as it has always hitherto done to my equals and superiors. I neither turned away the male servants because I did not like the cut of their beards, nor the female ones because they happened not to like the cut of mine. If they made

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up to Don Cæsar or his son at once, without currying my favor as the channel of all good graces, far from taking umbrage at them on that account, I spoke out officiously in their behalf. In other respects, too, the marks of confidence my two masters were incessantly lavishing on me inspired me with a substantial zeal for their service. Their interest was my real object; there was no sleight of hand in my ministry; I was such a caterer for the general good as you rarely meet with in private families or in political societies.

While I was hugging myself on the well-earned prosperity of my condition, love, jealous of my dealings with fortune, was bent on sharing my gratitude by the addition of a higher zest. He planted, watered, and ripened in the heart of Dame Lorenza Sephora, Seraphina's confidential woman, an abundant crop of liking for the happy steward. My Helen, not to sink the fidelity of the historian in the vanity of the man, could not be many months short of her fiftieth year. But for all that, a look of wholesomeness, a face none of the ugliest, and two good-looking eyes of which she knew the efficient use, might make her still pass for a decent bit of amusement in a summer evening. I could only just have been thankful for a little more relief to her complexion, since it was precisely the color of chalk; but that I attributed to maiden concealments, which had eat away all the damask of her cheek.

The lady ogled me for a long time with ogles that savored more of passion than of chastity; but

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instead of communing in the language of the eyes, I made pretence at first not to be sensible of my own happiness. Thus did my gallantry appear as if arrayed in its first blushes; a circumstance which was rather tempting than repulsive to her feelings. Taking it into her head, therefore, that there was no standing upon dumb eloquence with a young man who looked more like a novice than he was, at our very first interview she declared her sentiments in broad, unequivocal terms, that I might have no plea for misinterpretation. She played her part like an old stager; affected to be overwhelmed with confusion while she was speaking to me; and after having said all she wanted to say in a good audible voice, put her hand before her face, to hide the shame which was not there, and make me believe that she was incommoded by the delicacy of her own feelings. There was no standing such an attack; and though vanity had a larger share in my surrender than the tender passion, I did not receive her overtures ungraciously. Nay, more, I presumed to overlook decorum in my vivacity, and acted the impatient lover so naturally as to call down a modest rebuke upon my freedoms. Lorenza chid my fondness, but with so much fondness in her chidings, that while she prescribed to me the coldness of an anchorite, it was very evident she would have been miserably disappointed if I had taken her prescription. I should have pressed the affair at once to the natural termination of all such affairs, if the lovely object of my ardent wishes had not been afraid of giving me a

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left-handed opinion of her virtue, by abandoning the works before the siege was regularly formed. This being so, we parted, but with a promise to meet again; Sephora in the full persuasion that her reluctant resistance would stamp her for a vestal in my esteem, and myself full of the sweet hope that the torments of Tantalus would soon be succeeded by an elysium of enjoyment.

My affairs were in this happy train, when one of Don Cæsar's under servants brought me such a piece of news as gave an ague to my raptures. This lad was one of those inquisitive inmates who apply either an ear or an eye to every keyhole in a house. As he paid his court constantly to me, and served up some fresh piece of scandal every day, he came to tell me one morning that he had made a pleasant discovery; and that he had no objection to letting me into the fun, on condition that I would not blab; because Dame Lorenza Sephora was the theme of the joke, and he was afraid of becoming obnoxious to her resentment and revenge. I was too much interested in coming at the story he had to tell, not to swear myself into discretion through thick and thin; but it was necessary that my motive should seem curiosity, and not personal concern, so that I asked him, with an air of as much indifference as I could put on, what was this mighty discovery about which he made such a piece of work. Lorenza, whispered he, smuggles the surgeon of the village every evening into her apartment: he is a tight vessel, well armed and manned; and the pirate

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generally stays pretty long upon his cruise. I do not mean to say, added he, with supercilious candor, but that all this may be perfectly innocent on both sides, but you cannot help admitting that where a young man does insinuate himself slyly into a girl's bed-chamber, he takes better care of his own pleasure than of her reputation.

Though this tale gave me as much uneasiness as if I had been verily and romantically in love, I had too much sense to let him know it; but so far stifled my feelings as to laugh heartily at a story which struck at the very life of all my hopes. But when no witnesses were by, I made myself full amends for having gulped down my rising indignation. I blustered and stormed, muttered blessings on them the wrong way, and swore outright; but all this without coming nearer to a decision on my own conduct. At one time, holding Lorenza in utter contempt, it was my good pleasure to give her up altogether, without condescending so far as to come to any explanation with the coquette. At another time, laying it down as a principle that my honor was concerned in making the surgeon an example to all intriguers, I spirited up my courage to call him out. Thus dangerous valor prevailed over safe indifference. At the approach of evening I placed myself in ambuscade; and sure enough, the gentleman did slink into the temple of my Vesta, with a fear of being found out that spoke rather unfavorably for the purity of his designs. Nothing short of this could have kept my rage alive against the chilliness

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of the night air. I immediately quitted the precincts of the castle, and posted myself on the high road, where the gay deceiver was sure to be intercepted on his return. I waited for him with my fighting spirits on the full boil: my impatience increased with the lapse of time, till Mars and Bellona seemed to inhabit my frame, and enlarge it beyond human dimensions. At length my antagonist came in sight. I took a few strides, such as bully Mars or Bellona might have taken; but I do not know how the devil it came to pass, my courage went farther off as my body came nearer; my frame was contracted within somewhat less than its human dimensions, and my heart felt exactly like the heart of a coward. The hearts of Homer's heroes felt exactly the same, when the dastardly dogs were not backed by a supernatural Drawcansir! In short, I was just as much out of my element as ever Paris was when he pitted himself against Menelaus in single combat. I began taking measure of this operator in love, war, and anatomy. He appeared to be large limbed and well knit, with a sword by his side of a most abominable length. All this made me consider that the better part of valor is discretion: nevertheless, whether from the superiority of mind over the nervous system in a case of honor, or from whatever other cause, though the danger grew bigger as the distance diminished, and in spite of nature, which pleaded obstinately that honor is a mere scutcheon, and can neither set a leg nor take away the grief of a wound, I mustered up boldness enough to

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march forward towards the surgeon sword in hand.

My proceeding seemed to him to be of the drollest. What is the matter, Signor Gil Blas? exclaimed he. Why all this fire and fury? You are in a bantering mood, to all appearance. No, good master shaver, answered I, no such thing; there never was anything more serious since Cain killed Abel. I am determined to try the experiment, whether as little preparation serves your turn in the field of battle as in a lady's chamber. Hope not that you will be suffered to possess without a rival that heaven of bliss in which you have been indulging but this moment at the castle. By all the martyrdoms we phlebotomizers have ever suffered or inflicted, replied the surgeon, setting up a shout of laughter, this is a most whimsical adventure. As heaven is my judge, appearances are very little to be trusted. At this put off, fancying that he had no keener stomach for cold iron than myself, I got to be ten times more overbearing. Teach your parrot to speak better Spanish, my friend, interrupted I; do you think we do not know a hawk from a hernshaw? Imagine not that the simple denial of the fact will settle the business. I see plainly, replied he, that I shall be obliged to speak out, or some mischief must happen either to you or me. I shall therefore disclose a secret to you, though men in our profession cannot be too much on the reserve. If Dame Lorenza sends for me into her apartment under suspicious circumstances, it is only to conceal

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from the servants the knowledge of her malady. She has an incurable ulcer in her back, which I come every evening to dress. This is the real occasion of those visits which disturb your peace. Henceforward, rest assured that you have her all to yourself. But if you are not satisfied with this explanation, and are absolutely bent on a fencing match, you have only to say so: I am not a man to turn my back upon a game at sword play. With these words in his mouth, he drew his long rapier, which made my heart jump into my throat, and stood upon his guard. It is enough, said I, putting my sword up again in its scabbard; I am not a wild beast, to turn a deaf ear to reason: after what you have told me, there is no cause of enmity between us. Let us shake hands. At this proposal, by which he found out that I was not such a devil of a fellow as he had taken me for, he returned his weapon with a laugh, met my advances to be reconciled, and we parted the best friends in the world.

From that time forward Sephora never came into my thoughts but with the most disgusting associations. I shunned all the opportunities she gave me of entertaining her in private, and this with so obvious a study, almost bordering on rudeness, that she could not but notice it. Astonished at so sudden a reverse, she was dying to know the cause, and at length, finding the means of pinning me down to a tête-à-tête, Good Mr. Steward, said she, tell me, if so please you, why you avoid the very sight of me? It is true that I made the first advances; but then

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you fed the consuming fire. Recall to memory, if it is not too great a favor, the private interview we had together. Then you were a magazine of combustibles, now you are as frozen as the north sea. What is the meaning of all this? The question was not a little difficult of solution, for a man unaccustomed to the violence of amorous interrogatories. The consequence was, that it puzzled me most confoundedly. I do not precisely recollect the identical lie I told the lady, but I recollect perfectly that nothing but the truth could have affronted her more highly. Sephora, though by her mincing air and modest outside one might have taken her for a lamb, was a tigress when the savage was roused in her nature. I did think, said she, darting a glance at me full of malice and hideousness, I did think to have conferred such honor as was never conferred before, on a little scoundrel like you, by betraying sentiments which the first nobility in the country would make it their boast to excite. Fitly indeed am I punished for having preposterously lowered myself to the level of a dirty, snivelling adventurer.

That was pretty well; but she did not stop there: I should have come off too cheaply on such terms. Her fury taking a long lease of her tongue, that brawling instrument of discord rung a bob-major of invective, each strain more clamorous and confounding than the former. It certainly was my duty to have received it all with cool indifference, and to have considered candidly that in triumphing over female reserve, and then not taking possession of the

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conquest, I had committed that sin against the sex which would have transformed the most feminine of them into a Sephora. But I was too irritable to bear abuse, at which a man of sense in my place would only have laughed; and my patience was at length exhausted. Madam, said I, let us not rake into each other's personal misfortunes. If the first nobility in the country had only looked at your back, they would have forgotten all your other charms, and have boasted but little of the sentiments they had excited you to betray. I had no sooner laid in this home stroke, than the enraged duenna visited me with the hardest box on the ear that ever yet proceeded from the delicate fingers of a woman scorned. Such favors might pall on repetition; so I did not wait for a second, but took shelter in the nimbleness of my legs from the clatter of castigation she was going to shower down on me.

I returned thanks to the protecting powers for having brought me clear off from this unequal encounter, and fancied that I had nothing further to apprehend, since the lady had taken corporal vengeance. It was likely, too, that she would be wise and hold her tongue, for the honor of her own back; and, in point of fact, a full fortnight had elapsed without my hearing a word upon the subject. The very tingling in my own cheek began to abate, when I was told that Sephora was taken ill. With that forgiveness of injuries so natural to me, I was sincerely afflicted at the news. I really felt for the poor lady. I concluded that, unable to contend

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with a passion so ill repaid, that hapless victim of her own tenderness was giving up the ghost. It was with exquisite pain that I turned this subject in my thoughts. I was the cruel cause that her heart was breaking; and my pity, at least, was the duenna's, though love is too wayward to be controlled by advice. But I was miserably mistaken in her nature. Her tenderness had all curdled into acrimonious hatred; and at that very moment was she plotting to be my bane.

One morning, while I was with Don Alphonso, that amiable young master of mine was absent, moody, and out of spirits. I inquired respectfully what was the matter. I am vexed to the soul, said he, to find Seraphina weak, unjust, ungrateful. You are not a little surprised at this, added he, remarking the expression of astonishment with which I heard him; yet nothing is more strictly and lamentably true. I know not what reason you have given Dame Lorenza to be at variance with you; but true it is, you are become so unbearably hateful to her, that if you do not get out of this castle as soon as possible, her death, she says, must be the sure consequence. You cannot but suppose that Seraphina, who knows your value, used all her influence at first against a prejudice to which she could not administer without injustice and ingratitude. But though the best of women, she is still a woman. Sephora brought her up, and she loves her like a mother. Should her old nurse die shortly, she would fancy she had her death to answer for, had she refused herself to any

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of her whims. For my own part, with all my affection towards Seraphina, — and it is none of the weakest,—I will never be guilty of so mean a compliance as to side with her on this question. Perish our duennas! perish the whole system of our Spanish vigilance! but never let me consent to the banishment of a young man whom I look upon rather as a brother than a servant!

When Don Alphonso had thus expressed his sentiments, I said to him, My good sir, I am born to be the mere whipping-top of fortune. It had been my hope that she would leave off persecuting me when under your roof, where everything held out to me happy days and an unruffled life. Now, the part for honor to take is to tear myself away, whatever hankering I may feel after my continuance. No, no, exclaimed the generous son of Don Cæsar. Leave me to bring Seraphina to a proper view of things. It shall never be said that you are sacrificed to the caprices of a duenna, who, on every occasion, has but too much influence over the family. All you will get by it, sir, replied I, will only be to put Seraphina in an ill humor by opposing her wishes. I had much rather withdraw, than run the risk, by a longer abode here, of sowing division between a married pair, who are a model of conjugal felicity. Such a consequence of my unhappy quarrel would make me miserable for the remainder of my days.

Don Alphonso absolutely forbade me to take any hasty step; and I found him so determined in the

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intention of standing by me, that Lorenza must infallibly have been thrown into the background, if I had chosen to have stood an election against her. There were moments when, exasperated against the duenna, I was tempted to keep no measures with her; but when I came to consider that to unravel this surgical mystery would be to plunge a dagger into the heart of a poor creature, whose curse had been my fastidious prejudice against an ulcerated back, and whom a physical and mental misfortune were conjointly handing down to the grave, I lost all feeling but that of compassion towards her. It was evident, since I was so portentous a phenomenon, that it was my imperious duty to reëstablish the tranquillity of the castle by my absence; and that duty I performed the next morning before daybreak, without taking any leave of my two masters, for fear they should oppose my departure from a misplaced partiality towards me. My only notice was to leave behind in my chamber a memorial, containing an exact account of my receipts and disbursements during the time of my stewardship.

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CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED TO GIL BLAS AFTER HIS RETREAT FROM THE CASTLE OF LEYVA, SHOWING THAT THOSE WHO ARE CROSSED IN LOVE ARE NOT ALWAYS THE MOST MISERABLE OF MANKIND.

I WAS mounted on a good horse, my own property, and was the bearer of two hundred pistoles, the greater part of which arose from the plunder of the vanquished banditti, and the forfeiture of Samuel Simon by the Inquisition; for Don Alphonso, without requiring me to account for any part of the said forfeiture, had made restitution of the entire sum out of his own funds. Thus, considering my effects, however obtained, as converted into lawful property by a sort of vicarious sponsorship, I took them into my good graces without any remorse of conscience. An estate like this rendered it absurd to throw away any thought about the future; and a certain likelihood of doing well, which always hangs about a young man at my age, held out an additional security against the caprices of fortune. Besides, Toledo offered me a retreat exactly to my mind. There could not be a doubt but the Count de Polan would take a pleasure in giving a kind reception to one of his deliverers, and would insist on his accepting an apartment in his own house. But I only looked upon this nobleman as a very distant resource; and determined, before laying any tax on his grateful recollection, to spend part of my ready cash in

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travelling over the provinces of Murcia and Grenada, which I had a very particular inclination to see. With this intention I took the Almanza road, and afterwards, following the route chalked out, travelled from town to town as far as the city of Grenada, without stumbling on any sinister occurrence. It should seem as if fortune, wearied out with the school-girl's tricks she had been playing me, was contented at last to leave me as she found me. But she still had her skittish designs upon me, as will be seen in the sequel.

One of the first persons I met in the streets of Grenada was Signor Don Ferdinand de Leyva, son-in-law, as well as Don Alphonso, of the Count de Polan. We were both of us equally surprised at meeting so far from home. How is this, Gil Blas? exclaimed he—to find you in this city! What the devil brings you hither? Sir, said I, if you are astonished at seeing me in this country, you will be ten times more so when you shall know why I have quitted the service of Signor Don Cæsar and his son. Then I recounted to him all that had passed between Sephora and myself, without garbling the facts in any particular. He laughed heartily at the recital; then, recovering his gravity, My friend, said he, my mediation is at your service in this affair. I will write to my sister-in-law . . . No, no, sir, interrupted I, do not write upon the subject, I beseech you. I did not quit the castle of Leyva to go back again. You may, if you please, make another use of the kindness you have expressed for me. If any

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of your friends should be looking out for a secretary or a steward, I should be much obliged to you to speak a good word in my favor. I will take upon me to assure you that you will never be reproached with recommending an improper object. You have only to command me, answered he; I will do whatever you desire. My business at Grenada is to visit an old aunt in an ill state of health. I shall be here three weeks longer, after which I shall set out on my return to my castle of Lorqui, where I have left Julia. That is my lodging, added he, showing me a house about a hundred yards from us. Call upon me in a few days; probably I may by that time have hit upon some eligible appointment.

And, in fact, so it was; for the very first time that we came together again, he said to me, My Lord Archbishop of Grenada, my relation and friend, is in want of a young man with some little tinge of literature, who can write a good hand and make fair copies of his manuscripts, for he is a great author. He has composed I know not how many homilies, and still goes on composing more every day, which he delivers to the high edification of his audience. As you seem to be just the thing for him, I have mentioned your name, and he has promised to take you. Go, and make your bow to him as from me; you will judge, by his reception of you, whether my recommendation has been couched in handsome terms.

The situation was, to all appearance, exactly what I should have picked out for myself. That being

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the case, with such an arrangement of my air and person as seemed most likely to square with the ideas of a reverend prelate, I presented myself one morning before the archbishop. If this were a gorgeous romance, and not a grave history, here might we introduce a pompous description of the episcopal palace, with architectural digressions on the structure of the building; here would be the place to expatiate on the costliness of the furniture like an upholsterer, to criticise the statues and pictures like a connoisseur; and the pictures themselves would be nothing to the uninformed reader, without the stories they represent, till universal history, fabulous and authentic, sacred and profane, should be pressed into the service. But I shall content myself with modestly stating that the royal palace itself is scarcely superior in magnificence.

Throughout the suite of apartments, there was a complete mob of ecclesiastics and other officers, consisting of chaplains, ushers, upper and menial servants. Those of them who were laymen were most superbly attired; one would sooner have taken them for temporal nobility than for spiritual understrappers. They were as proud as the devil, and gave themselves intolerably consequential airs. I could not help laughing in my sleeve, when I considered who and what they were, and how they behaved. Set a beggar on horseback! said I. These gentry are in luck to carry a pack without feeling the drag of it, for surely if they knew they were beasts of burden, they would not jingle their bells with so

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high a toss of the head. I ventured just to speak to a grave and portly personage who stood sentinel at the door of the archbishop's closet, to turn it upon its hinges as occasion might require. I asked him civilly if there was no possibility of speaking with my lord archbishop. Stop a little, said he, with a supercilious demeanor and repulsive tone; his grace will shortly come forth, to go and hear mass; you may snatch an audience for a moment as he passes on. I answered not a single syllable. Patience was all I had for it; and it even seemed advisable to try and enter into conversation with some of the jacks in office; but they began conning me over from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head, without condescending to favor me with a single interjection; after which they winked at one another, whispered, and looked out at the corners of their eyes, in derision of the liberty I had assumed, by intruding upon their select society.

I felt, more fool that I did so, quite out of countenance at such cavalier treatment from a knot of state footmen. My confusion was but beginning to subside, when the closet door opened. The archbishop made his appearance. A profound silence immediately ensued among his officers, who quitted at once their insolent behavior, to adopt a more respectful style before their master. That prelate was in his sixty-ninth year, formed nearly on the model of my uncle, Gil Perez, the canon, which is as much as to say, as broad as he was long. But the highest dignitaries should always be the most

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amply gifted; accordingly his legs bowed inwards to the very extremity of the graceful curve, and his bald head retained but a single lock behind, so that he was obliged to ensconce his pericranium in a fine woollen cap with long ears. In spite of all this, I espied the man of quality in his deportment, doubtless, because I knew that he actually happened to be one. We common fellows, the fungous growth of the human dunghill, look up to great lords with a facility of being overawed, which often furnishes them with a Benjamin's mess of importance when nature has denied even the most scanty and trivial gifts.

The archbishop moved towards me in a minuet step, and kindly inquired what I wanted. I told him I was the young man about whom Signor Don Ferdinand de Leyva had spoken to him. He did not give me a moment to go on with my story. Ah! is it you? exclaimed he; is it you of whom so fine a character has been given me? I take you into my service at once; you are a mine of literary utility to me. You have only to take up your abode here. Talking thus condescendingly, he supported himself between two ushers, and moved onwards, after having given audience to some of his clergy, who had ecclesiastical business to communicate. He was scarcely out of the room, when the same officers who had turned upon their heel, were now cap in hand to court my conversation. Here the rascals are, pressing round me, currying favor, and expressing their sincere joy at seeing me become as it were an heirloom of the archbishopric. They

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had heard what their master had said, and were dying with anxiety to know on what footing I was to be about him; but I had the ill nature not to satisfy their curiosity, in revenge for their contempt.

My lord archbishop was not long before he returned. He took me with him into his closet for a little private conference. I could not but suppose that he meant to fathom the depth of my understanding. I was accordingly on my guard, and prepared to measure out my words most methodically. He questioned me first in the classics. My answers were not amiss; he was convinced that I had more than a schoolboy's acquaintance with the Greek and Latin writers. He examined me next in logic; nor could I but suppose that he would examine me in logic. He found me strong enough there. Your education, said he, with some degree of surprise, has not been neglected. Now let us see your handwriting. I took a blank piece of paper out of my pocket, which I had brought for the purpose. My ghostly father was not displeased with my performance. I am very well satisfied with the mechanical part of your qualifications, exclaimed he, and still more so with the powers of your mind. I shall thank my nephew, Don Ferdinand, most heartily, for having sent me so fine a lad; it is absolutely a gift from above.

We were interrupted by some of the neighboring gentry, who were come to dine with the archbishop. I left them together, and withdrew to the second table, where the whole household, with one consent,

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insisted on giving me the upper hand. Dinner is a busy time at an episcopal ordinary; and yet we snatched a moment to make our observations on each other. What a mortified propriety was painted on the outside of the clergy! They had all the look of a deputation from a better world: strange to think how place and circumstance impose on the deluded sense of men! It never once came into my thoughts that all this sanctity might possibly be a false coin; just as if there could be nothing but what appertained to the kingdom above, among the successors of the apostles on earth.

I was seated by the side of an old valet-de-chambre, by name Melchior de la Ronda. He took care to help me to all the nice bits. His attentions were not lost upon me, and my good manners quite enraptured him. My worthy sir, said he, in a low voice, after dinner I should like to have a little private talk with you. At the same time he led the way to a part of the palace where we could not be overheard, and there addressed me as follows: My son, from the very first instant that I saw you, I felt a certain prepossession in your favor. Of this I will give you a certain proof, by communicating in confidence what will be of great service to you. You are here in a family where true believers and painted hypocrites are playing at cross purposes against each other. It would take an antediluvian age to feel the ground under your feet. I will spare so long and so disgusting a study, by letting you into the characters on both sides. After this, if you do not play your cards, it is your own fault.

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I shall begin with his grace. He is a very pious prelate, employed without ceasing in the instruction of the people, whom he brings back to virtue, like sheep gone astray, by sermons full of excellent morality, and written by himself. He has retired from court these twenty years, to watch over his flock with the zeal of an affectionate pastor. He is a very learned person, and a very impressive declaimer: his whole delight is in preaching, and his congregation take care he should know that their whole delight is in hearing him. There may possibly be some little leaven of vanity in all this heavenly-mindedness; but, besides that it is not for human fallibility to search the heart, it would ill become me to rake into the faults of a person whose bread I eat. Were it decent to lay my finger on any thing unbecoming in my master, I should discommend his starchness. Instead of exercising forbearance towards frail churchmen, he visits every peccadillo as if it were a heinous offence. Above all, he prosecutes those with the utmost rigor of the spiritual court, who, wrapping themselves up in their innocence, appeal to the canons for their justification, in bar of his despotic authority. There is besides another awkward trait in his character, common to him with many other people of high rank. Though he is very fond of the people about him, he pays not the least attention to their services, but lets them sink into years without a moment's thought about securing them any provision. If at any time he makes them any little presents, they may thank the goodness of some one

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who shall have spoken up in their behalf: he would never have his wits enough about him to do the slightest thing for them as a volunteer.

This is just what the old valet-de-chambre told me of his master. Next, he let me into what he thought of the clergymen with whom we had dined. His portraits might be likenesses; but they were too hard-featured to be owned by the originals. It must be admitted, however, that he did not represent them as honest men, but only as very scandalous priests. Nevertheless, he made some exceptions, and was as loud in their praises as in his censure of the others. I was no longer at any loss how to play my part so as to put myself on an equal footing with these gentry. That very evening, at supper, I took a leaf out of their book, and arrayed myself in the convenient vesture of a wise and prudent outside. A clothing of humility and sanctification costs nothing. Indeed it offers such a premium to the wearer, that we are not to wonder if this world abounds in a description of people called hypocrites.

CHAPTER III.

GIL BLAS BECOMES THE ARCHBISHOP'S FAVORITE, AND THE CHANNEL OF ALL HIS FAVORS.

I HAD been after dinner to get together my baggage, and take my horse from the inn where I had put up, and afterwards returned to supper at the

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archbishop's palace, where a neatly-furnished room was got ready for me, and such a bed as was more likely to pamper than to mortify the flesh. The day following, his grace sent for me quite as soon as I was ready to go to him. It was to give me a homily to transcribe. He made a point of having it copied with all possible accuracy. It was done to please him; for I omitted neither accent, nor comma, nor the minutest tittle of all he had marked down. His satisfaction at observing this was heightened by its being unexpected. Eternal Father! exclaimed he in a holy rapture, when he had glanced his eye over all the folios of my copy, was ever any thing seen so correct? You are too good a transcriber not to have some little smattering of the grammarian. Now tell me with the freedom of a friend: in writing it over, have you been struck with nothing that grated upon your feelings? Some little careless idiom, or some word used in an improper sense? O! may it please your grace, answered I with a modest air, it is not for me, with my confined education and coarse taste, to aim at making critical remarks. And though ever so well qualified, I am satisfied that your grace's works would come out pure from the essay. The successor of the apostles smiled at my answer. He made no observation on it; but it was easy to see through all his piety that he was an arrant author at the bottom: there is something in that dye that not heaven itself can wash out.

I seemed to have purchased the fee-simple of his good graces by my flattery. Day after day did I get

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a step farther in his esteem; and Don Ferdinand, who came to see him very often, told me my footing was so firm, that there could not be a doubt but my fortune was made. Of this my master himself gave me a proof some little time afterwards; and the occasion was as follows: One evening in his closet he rehearsed before me, with appropriate emphasis and action, a homily which he was to deliver the next day in the cathedral. He did not content himself with asking me what I thought of it in the gross, but insisted on my telling him what passages struck me most. I had the good fortune to pick out those which were nearest to his own taste, his favorite common-places. Thus, as luck would have it, I passed in his estimation for a man who had a quick and natural relish of the real and less obvious beauties in a work. This, indeed, exclaimed he, is what you may call having discernment and feeling in perfection! Well, well, my friend! it cannot be said of you,

Boeotum in crasso jurares aëre natum.

In a word, he was so highly pleased with me, as to add, in a tone of extraordinary emotion, Never mind, Gil Blas! henceforward take no care about hereafter: I shall make it my business to place you among the favored children of my bounty. You have my best wishes; and to prove to you that you have them, I shall take you into my inmost confidence.

These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than I fell at his grace's feet, quite overwhelmed with gratitude. I embraced his elliptical legs with

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almost pagan idolatry, and considered myself as a man on the high road to a very handsome fortune. Yes, my child, resumed the archbishop, whose speech had been cut short by the rapidity of my prostration, I mean to make you the receiver-general of all my inmost ruminations. Hearken attentively to what I am going to say. I have a great pleasure in preaching. The Lord sheds a blessing on my homilies; they sink deep into the hearts of sinners; set up a glass in which vice sees its own image, and bring back many from the paths of error into the high road of repentance. What a heavenly sight, when a miser, scared at the hideous picture drawn by my eloquence of his avarice, opens his coffers to the poor and needy, and dispenses the accumulated store with a liberal hand? The voluptuary, too, is snatched from the pleasures of the table; ambition flies at my command to the wholesome discipline of the monastic cell; while female frailty, tottering on the brink of ruin, with one ear open to the siren voice of the seducer, and the other to my saintly correctives, is restored to domestic happiness and the approving smile of heaven, by the timely warnings of the pulpit. These miraculous conversions, which happen almost every Sunday, ought of themselves to goad me on in the career of saving souls. Nevertheless, to conceal no part of my weakness from my monitor, there is another reward on which my heart is intent, a reward which the seraphic scrupulousness of my virtue to little purpose condemns as too carnal; a literary reputation for a sublime and

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elegant style. The honor of being handed down to posterity as a perfect pulpit orator has its irresistible attractions. My compositions are generally thought to be equally powerful and persuasive; but I could wish of all things to steer clear of the rock on which good authors split, who are too long before the public, and to retire from professional life with my reputation in undiminished lustre.

To this end, my dear Gil Blas, continued the prelate, there is one thing requisite from your zeal and friendship. Whenever it shall strike you that my pen begins to contract, as it were, the ossification of old age, whenever you see my genius in its climacteric, do not fail to give me a hint. There is no trusting to one's self in such a case; pride and conceit were the original sin of man. The probe of criticism must be intrusted to an impartial standerby, of fine talents and unshaken probity. Both those requisites centre in you: you are my choice, and I give myself up to your direction. Heaven be praised, my lord, said I, there is no need to trouble yourself with any such thoughts yet. Besides, an understanding of your grace's mould and calibre will last out double the time of a common genius; or, to speak with more certainty and truth, it will never be the worse for wear, if you live to the age of Methusalem. I consider you as a second Cardinal Ximenes, whose powers, superior to decay, instead of flagging with years, seemed to derive new vigor from their approximation with the heavenly regions. No flattery, my friend! interrupted he. I know

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myself to be in danger of failing all at once. At my age one begins to be sensible of infirmities, and those of the body communicate with the mind. I repeat it to you, Gil Blas, as soon as you shall be of opinion that my head is not so clear as usual, give me warning of it instantly. Do not be afraid of offending by frankness and sincerity: to put me in mind of my own frailty will be the strongest proof of your affection for me. Besides, your very interest is concerned in it, for if it should, by any spite of chance towards you, come to my ears that the people say in town, "His grace's sermons produce no longer their accustomed impression; it is time for him to abandon his pulpit to younger candidates," I do assure you, most seriously and solemnly, you will lose not only my friendship, but the provision for life that I have promised you. Such will be the result of your silly tampering with truth.

Here my patron left off to wait for my answer, which was an echo of his speech, and a promise of obeying him in all things. From that moment there were no secrets from me; I became the prime favorite. All the household, except Melchior de la Ronda, looked at me with an eye of envy. It was curious to observe the manner in which the whole establishment, from the highest to the lowest, thought it necessary to demean themselves towards his grace's confidential secretary; there was no meanness to which they would not stoop to curry favor with me; I could scarcely believe they were

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Spaniards. I left no stone unturned to be of service to them, without being taken in by their interested assiduities. My lord archbishop, at my entreaty, took them by the hand. He got a company for one, and fitted him out so as to make a handsome figure in the army. Another he sent to Mexico, with a considerable appointment which he procured him; and I obtained a good slice of his bounty for my friend Melchior. It was evident, from these facts, that if the prelate was not particularly active in good works, at least he rarely gave a churlish refusal, when any one had the courage to importune him for his benevolence.

But what I did for a priest seems to deserve being noticed more at large. One day a certain licentiate, by name Lewis Garcias, a well-looking man still in the prime of life, was presented to me by our steward, who said, Signor Gil Blas, in this honest ecclesiastic you behold one of my best friends. He was formerly chaplain to a nunnery. Scandal has taken a few liberties with his chastity. Malicious stories have been trumped up to hurt him in my lord archbishop's opinion, who has suspended him, and unfortunately is so strongly prejudiced by his enemies, as to be deaf to any petition in his favor. In vain have we interested the first people in Grenada to get him reëstablished; our master will not hear of it.

These first people in Grenada, said I, have gone the wrong way to work. It would have been much better if no interest at all had been made for the

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reverend licentiate. People have only done him a mischief by endeavoring to serve him. I know my lord archbishop thoroughly: entreaties and importunate recommendations do but aggravate the ill condition of a clergyman who lies under his displeasure: it is but a very short time ago since I heard him mutter the following sentiment to himself. The more persons a priest, who has been guilty of any misconduct, engages to speak to me in his behalf, the more widely is the scandal of the church disseminated; and the more severe is my treatment of the offender. That is very unlucky, replied the steward; and my friend would be put to his last shifts if he did not write a good hand. But, happily, he has the pen of a ready scribe, and keeps his head above water by the exercise of that talent. I was curious to see whether this boasted handwriting was so much better than my own. The licentiate, who had a specimen in his pocket, showed me a sheet which I admired very much: it had all the regularity of a writing-master's copy. In looking over this model of penmanship, an idea occurred to me. I begged Garcias to leave this paper in my hands, saying that I might be able to do something with it which should turn out to his advantage; that I could not explain myself at that moment, but would tell him more the next day. The licentiate, to whom the steward had evidently talked big about my capacity to serve him, withdrew in as good spirits as if he had already been restored to his functions.

I was in earnest in my endeavor that he should

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be so, and lost no time in setting to work. Happening to be alone with the archbishop, I produced the specimen. My patron was delighted with it. Seizing on this favorable opportunity, May it please your grace, said I, since you are determined not to put your homilies to the press, I should very much like them at least to be transcribed in this masterly manner.

I am very well satisfied with your performance, answered the prelate; but yet I own that it would be a pleasant thing enough to have a copy of my works in that hand. Your grace, replied I, has only to signify your wishes. The man who copies so well is a licentiate of my acquaintance. It will give him so much the more pleasure to gratify you, as it may be the means of interesting your goodness to extricate him from the melancholy situation to which he has the misfortune at present to be reduced.

The prelate could not do otherwise than inquire the name of this licentiate. I told him it was Lewis Garcias. He is in despair at having drawn down your censure upon him. That Garcias, interrupted he, if I am not mistaken, was chaplain in a convent of nuns, and has been brought into the ecclesiastical court as a delinquent. I recollect some very heavy charges which have been sent me against him. His morals are not the most exemplary. May it please your grace, interrupted I in my turn, it is not for me to justify him in all points; but I know that he has enemies. He maintains that the authors of the informations you have received are more bent on doing

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him an ill office than on vindicating the purity of religion. That very possibly may be the case, replied the archbishop; there are a great many firebrands in the world. Besides, though we should take it for granted that his conduct has not always been above suspicion, he may have repented of his sins; in short, the mercies of heaven are infinite, however heinous our transgressions. Bring that licentiate before me; I take off his suspension.

Thus it is that men of the most austere character descend from their altitudes when interest or a favorite whim reduces them to the level of the frail. The archbishop granted, without a struggle, to the empty vanity of having his works well copied, what he had refused to the most respectable applications. I carried the news with all possible expedition to the steward, who communicated it to his friend Garcias. That licentiate, on the following day, came to return me thanks commensurate with the favor obtained. I presented him to my master, who contented himself with giving him a slight reprimand, and put the homilies into his hand, to copy them out fair. Garcias performed the task so satisfactorily, that he was reinstated in the cure of souls, and was afterwards preferred to the living of Gabia, a large market town in the neighborhood of Grenada.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE ARCHBISHOP IS AFFLICTED WITH A STROKE OF APOPLEXY. HOW GIL BLAS GETS INTO A DILEMMA, AND HOW HE GETS OUT.

WHILE I was thus rendering myself a blessing first to one and then to the other, Don Ferdinand de Leyva was making his arrangements for leaving Grenada. I called on that nobleman before his departure, to thank him once more for the advantageous post he had procured me. My expressions of satisfaction were so lively, that he said, My dear Gil Blas, I am delighted to find you in such good humor with my uncle the archbishop. I am absolutely in love with him, answered I. His goodness to me has been such as I can never sufficiently acknowledge. Less than my present happiness could never have made me amends for being at so great a distance from Don Cæsar and his son. I am persuaded, replied he, that they are both of them equally chagrined at having lost you. But possibly you are not separated forever; fortune may some day bring you together again. I could not hear such an idea started without being moved by it. My sighs would find vent; and I felt at that moment so strong an affection for Don Alphonso, that I could willingly have turned my back on the archbishop and all the fine prospects that were opening to me, and have gone back to the castle of Leyva, had but a mortification taken place in the back of the scarecrow which

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had frightened me away. Don Ferdinand was not insensible to the emotions that agitated me, and felt himself so much obliged by them, that he took his leave with the assurance of the whole family always taking an anxious interest in my fate.

Two months after this worthy gentleman had left us, in the luxuriant harvest of my highest favor, a lowering storm came suddenly over the episcopal palace; the archbishop had a stroke of apoplexy. By dint of immediate applications and good nursing, in a few days there was no bodily appearance of disease remaining. But his reverend intellects did not so easily recover from their lethargy. I could not help observing it to myself in the very first discourse that he composed. Yet there was not such a wide gap between the merits of the present and the former ones as to warrant the inference that the sun of oratory was many degrees advanced in its post-meridian course. A second homily was worth waiting for, because that would clearly determine the line of my conduct. Alas, and well-a-day! when that second homily came, it was a knock-down argument. Sometimes the good prelate moved forward, and sometimes he moved backwards; sometimes he mounted up into the garret, and sometimes dipped down into the cellar. It was a composition of more sound than meaning, something like a superannuated schoolmaster's theme, when he attempts to give his boys more sense than he possesses of his own, or like a capuchin's sermon, which only scatters a few artificial flowers of paltry rhetoric over a barren desert of doctrine.

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I was not the only person whom the alteration struck. The audience at large, when he delivered it, as if they too had been pledged to watch the advances of dotage, said to one another in a whisper all round the church, Here is a sermon with symptoms of apoplexy in every paragraph. Come, my good Coryphæus of the public taste in homilies, said I then to myself, prepare to do your office. You see that my lord archbishop is going very fast — you ought to warn him of it, not only as his bosom friend, on whose sincerity he relies, but lest some blunt fellow should anticipate you, and bolt out the truth in an offensive manner, in that case you know the consequence; you would be struck out of his will, where, no doubt, you have a more convertible bequest than the licentiate Sedillo's library.

But as reason, like Janus, looks at things with two faces, I began to consider the other side of the question; the hint seemed difficult to wrap up so as to make it palatable. Authors in general are stark mad on the subject of their own works, and such an author might be more testy than the common herd of the irritable race; but that suspicion seemed illiberal on my part, for it was impossible that my freedom should be taken amiss when it had been forced upon me by so positive an injunction. Add to this, that I reckoned upon handling the subject skilfully, and cramming discretion down his throat like a high-seasoned epicurean dish. After all my pro and con, finding that I risked more by keeping silence than by breaking it, I determined to venture on the delicate duty of speaking my mind.

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Now there was but one difficulty; a difficulty indeed! how to open the business. Luckily the orator himself extricated me from that embarrassment, by asking what they said of him in the world at large, and whether people were tolerably well pleased with his last discourse. I answered that there could be but one opinion about his homilies; but that it should seem as if the last had not quite struck home to the hearts of the audience, like those which had gone before. Do you really mean what you say, my friend? replied he, with a sort of wriggling surprise. Then my congregation are more in the temper of Aristarchus than of Longinus! No, may it please your grace, rejoined I, quite the contrary. Performances of that order are above the reach of vulgar criticism: there is not a soul but expects to be saved by their influence. Nevertheless, since you have made it my duty to be sincere and unreserved, I shall take the liberty of just stating that your last discourse is not written with quite the overpowering eloquence and conclusive argument of your former ones. Does not your grace feel just as I do on the subject?

This ignorant and stupid frankness of mine completely blanched my master's cheek; but he forced a fretful smile, and said, Then, good Master Gil Blas, that piece does not exactly hit your fancy? I did not mean to say that, your grace, interrupted I, looking very foolish. It is very far superior to what any one else could produce, though a little below par with respect to your own works in general. I know

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what you mean, replied he. You think I am going down hill, do not you? Out with it at once. It is your opinion that it is time for me to think of retiring? I should never have had the presumption, said I, to deliver myself with so little reserve, if it had not been your grace's express command. I act in entire obedience to your grace's orders; and I most obsequiously implore your grace not to take offence at my boldness. I were unfit to live in a Christian land, interrupted he, with stammering impatience,—I were unfit to live in a Christian land if I liked you the less for such a Christian virtue as sincerity. A man who does not love sincerity sets his face against the distinguishing mark between a friend and a flatterer. I should have given you infinite credit for speaking what you thought, if you had thought any thing that deserved to be spoken. I have been finely taken in by your outside show of cleverness, without any solid foundation of sober judgment!

Though completely unhorsed, and at the enemy's mercy, I wanted to make terms of decent capitulation, and to go unmolested into winter quarters; but let those who think to appease an exasperated author, and especially an author whose ear has been long attuned to the music of his own praises, take warning by my fate. Let us talk no more on the subject, my very young friend, said he. You are as yet scarcely in the rudiments of good taste, and utterly incompetent to distinguish between gold and tinsel. You are yet to learn that I never in all my

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life composed a finer homily than that unfortunate one which had not the honor of your approbation. The immortal part of me, by the blessing of heaven on me and my congregation, is less weighed down by human infirmity than when the flesh was stronger. We all grow wiser as we grow older, and I shall in future select the people about me with more caution; nor submit the castigation of my works but to a much abler critic than yourself. Get about your business! pursued he, giving me an angry shove by the shoulders out of his closet; go and tell my treasurer to pay you a hundred ducats, and take my priestly blessing in addition to that sum. God speed you, good Master Gil Blas! I heartily pray that you may do well in the world! There is nothing to stand in your way but the want of a little better taste.

CHAPTER V.

THE COURSE WHICH GIL BLAS TOOK AFTER THE ARCHBISHOP HAD GIVEN HIM HIS DISMISSAL. HIS ACCIDENTAL MEETING WITH THE LICENTIATE WHO WAS SO DEEPLY IN HIS DEBT, AND A PICTURE OF GRATITUDE IN THE PERSON OF A PARSON.

I MADE the best of my way out of the closet, cursing the caprice, or more properly the dotage, of the archbishop, and more in dudgeon at his absurdity, than cast down at the loss of his good graces. For some time it was a moot point whether I should go and lay claim to my hundred ducats; but after hav-

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ing weighed the matter dispassionately, I was not such a fool as to quarrel with my bread and butter. There was no reason why that money, fairly earned, should deprive me of my natural right to make a joke of this ridiculous prelate; in which good deed I promised myself not to be wanting, as often as himself or his homilies were brought upon the carpet in my hearing.

I went therefore and asked the treasurer for a hundred ducats, without telling a word about the literary warfare between his master and me. Afterwards I called on Melchior de la Ronda, to take a long leave of him. He was too much my friend not to sympathize with my misfortune. While I was telling my story, vexation was strongly imprinted on his countenance. In spite of all his respect for the archbishop, he could not help blaming him; but, when in the fever of my resentment I threatened to be a match for the prelate, and to entertain the whole city at his expense, the prudent Melchior gave me a salutary caution: Take my advice, my dear Gil Blas, and rather pocket the affront. Men of a lower sphere in life should always be cap in hand to people of quality, whatever may be their grounds of complaint. It must be admitted there are some very coarse specimens of greatness, which in themselves are scarcely deserving of the least respect or attention; but even such animals have their weapons of annoyance, and it is best to keep out of their way.

I thanked the old valet-de-chambre for the good counsel he had given me, and promised to be guided

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by it. Pleased with my deference to his opinion, he said to me, If you go to Madrid, be sure you call upon my nephew, Joseph Navarro. He is factotum in the family of Signor Don Balthazar de Zunigna, and I can venture to recommend him as a lad in every respect worthy of your friendship. He is just as nature made him, with all the vivacity of youth, courteous in his manners, and forward to oblige; I could wish you to get acquainted with him. I answered that I would not fail to go and see this Joseph Navarro as soon as I should get to Madrid, whither I meant to return in due time. Then did I turn my back on the episcopal palace, never to grace it with my presence again. If I had kept my horse, I should perhaps have set out for Toledo immediately; but I had sold it during the period of my administration, supposing that I was in office for life, and should not henceforward be migratory. My final resolution was to hire a ready-furnished lodging, as I had made up my mind to stay another month in Grenada, and then to pay the Count de Polan a visit.

As dinner-hour was drawing nigh, I asked my landlady if there was any eating-house in the neighborhood. She answered that there was a very good one within a few yards of her house, where the accommodations were excellent, and the company select and numerous. I made her show me where it was, and went thither sharp set. I was shown into a large room, resembling the hall of a monastery in every thing but good cheer. There were ten or a

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dozen men sitting at a long table, with a cloth spread over it that fretted in its own grease; but they, with unoffended nostrils, were engaged in general conversation, though they dined individually, each having a miserable scrap for his portion. The people of the house brought me my allowance, which at another time would have turned my stomach, and have made me sigh after the luxuries of the table I had just lost. But at this moment I was so indignant against the archbishop, that the homely fare of a paltry eating-house seemed more palatable than the dainties of his sumptuous board. It was a burning shame to see such a waste of provisions served up in soups and sauces to pamper the appetite. Arguing like a deep examiner in the economy of the human frame, and reasoning medically as well as philosophically on the disproportion between the simple wants of nature and the complexity of luxurious indulgence, Cursed be they, said I, who invented those pernicious dinners and suppers, where one must sit on the tenterhooks of self-denial, for fear of overloading the storehouse and shop of the whole body! Man wants but little here below; and provided he can but keep body and soul together, the less he eats, the better. Thus did I, in my surly vein, give utterance to wise saws; which, however just in theory, had hitherto been little recommended by my practice.

While I was despatching my commons, without any danger of a surfeit from repletion, the licentiate Lewis Garcias, who had got the living of Gabia in the manner above mentioned, came into the room.

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The moment he recognized me, he ran into my arms with all the cordiality of friendship, or rather with the extravagant joy of a lover after a long exile from his mistress. He folded me repeatedly within his sincere embrace, and I was compelled to stand the brunt of a long-winded compliment on the unparalleled disinterestedness of my conduct towards him. Gratitude is a fine virtue; and yet it is wearisome when carried beyond due bounds. He took his seat next me, saying, Well! a parson must not swear; though, by the mass, my dear patron, since my good fortune has thrown me in your way, we will not part without a jovial glass. But as there is no good wine in this shabby inn, I will take you, if you please, after our make-shift dinner, to a place where I will treat you with a couple of bottles, rich, genuine, and old, in comparison of which the Falernian of Horace was all a farce. The church will give us absolution, in the cause of gratitude! If I could but get you for a few days down at my parsonage of Gabia! Mæcenas was never more welcome to the poet's Sabine farm, than the author of all my ease and comfort to the choicest produce of a glebe which is mine only by your benevolence.

While he was holding this high-flown language, his little slice of dinner was set before him. He fell to without the fear of indigestion before his eyes, still heightening the luxury of the repast, at intervals, by fine speeches addressed to me in the most fulsome style of flattery. I took the opportunity, when his mouth was filled with something more substantial, to

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edge in a word or two amidst the torrent; and as he had not forgotten to ask after his friend the steward, I made no bones about acknowledging that I was no longer a hanger-on of the church. I even went so far as to particularize the most trivial circumstances attending my resignation, to all of which he listened with an attentive ear. After all his fine professions, who would not have expected to see him moved even to tears with the throes of resentful gratitude, to hear him thunder bulls and interdicts against the superannuated archbishop? The devil a bit! he did neither the one thing nor the other. But his countenance fell, and his whole air was that of an absent man; the rest of his dinner was bolted down without the garnish of intermediate talk about Mæcenas; as soon as he had done, he hurried from table without minding grace or gratitude, wished me good day with a cold and distant air, and got off as fast as possible. The unfeeling scoundrel, perceiving that I was no longer in a situation for him to pump anything out of me, would not even take the trouble to draw a decent veil over his dirty principles. But such a blackguard could excite no other sensation than contempt and laughter. Looking at him with derision, the fittest chastisement for fellows like these, I called after him, loud enough to be heard by the whole room, Stop there, you nun's priest! Go and put those two bottles in ice against Mæcenas comes to the Sabine farm! Be sure they are rich, genuine, and old, or they will be a farce to Falernian.

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CHAPTER VI.

GIL BLAS GOES TO THE PLAY AT GRENADA. HIS SURPRISE AT SEEING ONE OF THE ACTRESSES, AND WHAT HAPPENED THEREUPON.

No sooner had Garcias rid the room of his presence, than two gentlemen came in, extremely well dressed, and took their seats close by me. They began talking about the players of the Grenada company, and about a new piece which just then had a great run. According to their account, it was quite the town talk. Nothing would do for me but to go and see it that very day. I had never been at the play since my residence at Grenada. As I had lived nearly the whole time in the archbishop's palace, where all such profane shows were condemned as uncanonical, I had been cut off from every recreation of that sort. All my knowledge of men and manners was drawn from homilies!

I repaired, therefore, to the theatre at the appointed hour, and found a very full house. All around me, discussions were going on about the piece before the curtain drew up; and there was not a soul in the numerous assembly but had some remark to make upon it. One liked it, another could not bear it. Do not you think the dialogue is particularly happy? said a candid critic on my right. Was there ever such miserable stuff! cried a snarling critic on my left. In good truth, if bad authors abound, it must be admitted that the public are at

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variance about what is good and what is bad: but the bad judges have a right to be pleased for their money; and as they far outnumber the good ones, their favorite writers can never want employment. When one only considers through what an ordeal dramatic poets have to pass, it is a matter of wonder that any should be found hardy enough at once to contend against the ignorance of the multitude, and the random shot of those self-created guides in matters of taste, who always pretend to lead the blindness of the public judgment, and too frequently push it into the mire of absurdity.

At length the buffoon of the piece came forward by way of prologue. As soon as his grotesque countenance was visible, there was a general clapping of hands; a sure indication of his being one of those spoiled actors who are allowed to take any liberties with the pit, and to be applauded through thick and thin. In fact, this player neither opened his lips, nor moved a muscle, without exciting the most extravagant raptures. He would have performed better had he been less conscious what a favorite he was. But he presumed on that circumstance most abominably. I observed that he sometimes forgot what was set down for him, and took the license of adding to his part out of his own free fancy; a common cause of complaint against low comedians, which, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve. Would the audience but receive such mirth with hisses, instead of crying bravo, they might restrain the absurd practice, and purge the stage from barbarism.

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Some of the other performers were greeted with the usual tokens on their entrance, and particularly an actress who played the chambermaid. There was something about her which more than usually attracted my attention; and language must sink under the labor of expressing my astonishment at tracing the features of Laura, that fair, that chaste, that inexpressible she, whom I supposed to be still at Madrid, warbling in one key, with hands, sides, voice, and mind incorporate with Arsenia. But there could be no doubt of her identity. The kick in her gallop, the leer in her eye, and the tripping pertness of her tongue, all conspired in evidence that there could be no mistake. Yet, as if I had refused belief to the affidavit of my own eyes and ears, I asked her name of a gentleman who was sitting beside me. What the deuce! Why, where do you come from? said he. You must unquestionably be a new importation, not to have seen or heard of the divine Estella.

The likeness was too perfect for me to be mistaken. It was easy to comprehend why Laura, changing her sphere of action, changed her name also; wherefore, from curiosity to know how matters stood with her, since the public always pry into the most private concerns of theatrical persons, I inquired of the same man whether this Estella had any particular affair of gallantry on her hands. He informed me that for the last two months there had been a great Portuguese nobleman at Grenada,—his name was the Marquis de Marialva,—who had laid out a great deal

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of money upon her. He might have told me more, if I had not been afraid of becoming troublesome with my questions. I was better employed in musing on the information this good gentleman had given me than in attending to the play; and if any one had asked me what it was all about, when the piece was over, I should have been puzzled for an answer. I could do nothing but decline Laura and Estella through all cases and numbers, till at length I boldly made up my mind to call at her house the next day. Not but there was some risk as to the reception she might give me: it might be suspected, without excess of modesty, that my appearance would give her no great pleasure in the high tide of her affairs; nor was it at all improbable that so good an actress, to revenge herself on a man with whom certainly she had an account to settle, might look strange, and swear she had never seen his face before. Yet did none of these apprehensions deter me from my venture. After a light supper,—for all the meals at my eating-house were regulated on principles of economy and temperance,—I withdrew to my chamber with an anxious longing for the next day.

My sleep was short and interrupted, so that I got up by daybreak. But as it was to be recollected that a mistress in high keep was not likely to be visible early in the morning, I passed three or four hours in dressing, shaving, powdering, and perfuming. It was my business to present myself before her in a trim not to put her to the blush at

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acknowledging my acquaintance. I sallied forth about ten o'clock, and knocked at her door, after having inquired her address at the theatre. She was living on the first floor of a large and elegant house. I told a chambermaid, who opened the door to me, that a young man wanted to speak with her lady. The chambermaid went in to give my message, when all at once I heard her mistress call out, not in the best-tempered tone in the world, Who is the young man? What does he want? Show him up stairs.

This was a hint to me that my time was ill chosen; that probably her Portuguese lover was at her toilet, and that she spoke so loud with the laudable design of convincing him that she was not a sort of girl to allow of any impertinent intruders. This conjecture of mine turned out to be the fact; the Marquis de Marialva lounged away almost every morning with her; I had made up my mind to be kicked down stairs by way of welcome; but that admirable actress, never forgetting her cue, ran forward with open arms at the sight of me, exclaiming, Ah! my dear brother, is it you that I behold? On the strength of so near a kindred, she was no niggard of her embraces, but recollected herself so far as to say, turning round to the Portuguese, My lord, you must excuse me if nature will put in her claim, and trench upon good breeding. After three years of absence, I cannot see a brother once again, whom I love so tenderly, without expressing my feelings in all their warmth. Come! my dear Gil Blas, con-

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tinued she, addressing me afresh, tell me some news of the family: in what circumstances did you leave it?

This whimsical scene disconcerted me at first, but I was not long in seeing through Laura's intention, and playing up to her with a spirit scarcely less than her own, answered, according to the plot, Heaven be praised, sister, all our good folks are in perfect health, and well in the world. I make no doubt, resumed she, but you must be very much surprised to find me an actress in Grenada; but hear me first, and blame me afterwards. It is three years, as you may recollect, since my father thought to have established me advantageously in marriage with Don Antonio Cœllo, an officer in the service, who took me from the Asturias to Madrid, his native place. Six months after our arrival, he got into an affair of honor in consequence of his violent temper. Some attentions incautiously paid to me were the cause of the affray, and his antagonist was killed. This gentleman was of a family high in rank and interest. My husband, who, though well born, had very few connections, made his escape into Catalonia with every thing he could get together in jewels and ready money. He embarked at Barcelona, went over into Italy, enlisted in the Venetian service, and finally lost his life in the Morea, fighting against the Turks. In the mean time, a landed estate which constituted our whole revenue was confiscated, and I was left a widow with very little for my support. What was to be done in so pressing an emergency? There was nothing left to pay my travelling ex-

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penses back into the Asturias. And then what should I have done there? I should have got nothing from my family but a long string of condolences, which would have furnished me neither with food nor with raiment. On the other hand, I had been too well brought up to fall into those courses, into which too many poor young women are betrayed for the sake of a scandalous subsistence. There was but one thing remaining for me to determine on. I turned actress to preserve my morals.

So tingling a sense of ridicule came over me when Laura wound up her romance with this pious motive for turning actress, that I could scarcely refrain from relieving myself by a fit of laughter. But gravity was of too much consequence to be dispensed with, and I said to her with an air the counterpart of her own, My dear sister, I entirely approve of your conduct, and am heartily glad to meet with you at Grenada, and moreover settled on so respectable a footing.

The Marquis de Marialva, who had not lost a word of all these fine speeches, swallowed down blindfold whatever Don Antonio's widow thought fit to drench his credulity with. He took part in the conversation too, and asked me whether I had any fixed employment in Grenada or elsewhere. I paused for a moment to consider whether and after what manner I should lie; but as there seemed no need in this case to draw on my invention, I told the truth by way of variety. In a plain, matter-of-fact manner did I rehearse my introduction to the arch-

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bishop's palace, and my discharge therefrom, to the infinite amusement of his Portuguese lordship. To be sure, in telling the truth, I did not keep my word, for I could not help launching out a little at the archbishop's expense, in spite of my solemn promise given to Melchior. But the best of the joke was, that Laura, taking my story for a fiction invented after her example, burst out into peals of laughter; whereas the whimsicality of the circumstance would have raised a soberer mirth, had she known it to have been alloyed with the base ingredient of veracity.

After having come to the end of my tale, which closed with just mentioning the lodging I had taken, dinner was announced. I instantly motioned to withdraw, as if intending to take that frugal meal at home; but Laura would not hear of it. Do you mean to affront me, brother? said she. You must dine here. Indeed I cannot think of your staying any longer at a paltry inn. You must positively board and lodge in my house. Send your trunks hither this very evening; there is a spare bed for you.

His Portuguese lordship, possibly not altogether relishing this excess of hospitality even to a brother, then interfered between us, and said to Laura, No, Estella, you have not sufficient accommodation to give him a bed without inconvenience. Your brother seems to be a clever young fellow, and the circumstance of his being so nearly related to you gives him a strong claim on my kindness. He shall be

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put at once upon my establishment. I am in want of a secretary, and shall delight in giving him the appointment; he shall be my right-hand man. Let him be sure to come and sleep at my house this very night; I will order a room to be got ready for him. I will fix his regular salary at four hundred ducats; and if, on better acquaintance, I have reason, as I trust I shall, to be satisfied with him, I will place him in a situation to laugh at the consequences of having been a little too plain-spoken with his patron the archbishop.

My acknowledgments to the marquis for this high honor were followed by those of Laura, who far exceeded me in powers of panegyric. Let us drop the subject, interrupted he; it is a settled point. Settled as it was, he confirmed the contract on the lips of his green-room Dulcinea, and went his way. She immediately pulled me by the arm into a closet, where, secure from interruption, she cried out, Cut my laces! I shall burst if I do not give way at once to the fit of laughter that is coming over me. And so she probably would; for she threw herself into an arm-chair, and holding both her sides, shouted out her convulsive peal of mirth like a mad woman. It was impossible for me to refrain from following her example. When we had exhausted our risible propensities, Own, Gil Blas, said she, that we have just been acting a very humorous farce. But I did not look for the concluding scene. My only thought was to secure you board and lodging under my own roof; and there was no other possibility of making

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the proposition in a modest way but by passing you off for my brother. But I am heartily glad that the chapter of accidents has opened with so good a berth for you. The Marquis de Marialva is a nobleman of liberal and honorable sentiments, who will be better than his word in what he does for you. But confess now! There is scarcely a woman in existence except myself, would have given so coming-on a reception to a fellow who shirks his friends without saying with your leave or by your leave. I, however, am one of those simple-hearted girls, who are glad to receive back again the base man they have once loved, though he should have offended and repented seven, or even seven thousand times.

The best way for me was to acknowledge the extreme ill-breeding of which I had been guilty, to blush and beg pardon once for all. After this explanation, she led the way to a very handsome dining-room. We placed ourselves at table, where, having a chambermaid and a footboy for eye-witnesses, we kept within the bounds of brother and sister. When we had done dinner, we went back again into the same closet where we had been conversing before. Having our time to ourselves, my paragon of a Laura, giving herself up to her natural love of merriment, and to her no less natural curiosity, required from me a faithful and true narrative of all my pros and cons, my ins and outs, since that unmannerly separation of ours. I gave her a full and particular account; nothing extenuating on my own behalf, nor setting down aught in malice on the other

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side. When I had quenched her thirst after a story, she slaked mine, by communicating the particulars of her eventful life to the following effect.

CHAPTER VII.

LAURA'S STORY.

I SHALL just run over to you, as briefly as possible, the circumstances which led me to embrace the theatrical profession.

After you took French leave, so much to your credit, great events happened. My mistress Arsenia, more surfeited with a glut of pleasures than scandalized at their immorality, renounced the stage, and took me with her to a fine estate which she had just purchased in the neighborhood of Zenora with the wages of her sinful life. We soon got acquainted in the town. Our visits there were very frequent, and sometimes for a day or two together. With the exception of these little excursions, we were as closely domesticated as probationers in a nunnery, and almost as piously employed.

On one of our high days and holidays, Don Felix Maldonado, the corregidor's only son, saw me by chance, and took a liking to me. He soon found an opportunity of speaking with me in private; and, as it is in vain to affect modesty before one who knows me so well, there was some little contrivance

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of my own to bring the interview about. The young gentleman was not twenty years of age; the very picture of Venus's sweetheart, or Venus's sweetheart the very picture of him, with a form for a sculptor to work from; with an address so elegant, and with sentiments so generous, as to throw even his personal graces into the background. There was such a winning way with him, so pressing an earnestness to prevail, when he took a large diamond from his own finger, and slid it upon mine, that it would have been quite brutal not to have let it stay there. It was really something like sentiment that I began to entertain towards a swain of so interesting a character. But what an absurd thing it is for wenches of a certain sort to hook themselves upon young men of family, when their surly fathers hold official situations! The corregidor, who had scarcely his equal in the whole tribe of corregidors, got wind of our correspondence, and determined to close it in a summary manner. He sent a host of alguazils to take me into custody, who dragged me away, in spite of my cries and tears, to the house of correction for female penitents.

There, without bill of indictment or form of trial, the lady abbess ordered me to be stripped of my ring and my clothes, and to be dressed in the habit of the institution, — a long gown of gray serge tied about the middle with a strap of black leather, whence depended a rosary with large beads swinging down to my heels. After this pleasant reception, they took me into a hall, where there was an old monk,

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—the deuce knows of what order,—who set to work preaching up repentance and resignation, pretty much in the same strain as Dame Leonarda, when she exhorted you to patience in the subterraneous cavern. He told me that I was excessively obliged indeed to those good people who had so kindly shut me up, and could never thank them sufficiently for their good deed in rescuing me from the harpy talons of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But I must frankly own that all my other sins were pressed down and heaped high with ingratitude: far from overflowing with the milk of human kindness towards those who had conferred such a favor upon me, I abused them in terms that would have put any dictionary to the blush.

Eight days thus passed in this wilderness of desolation; but on the ninth—for I had notched the hours and even the minutes on a stick—my fate seemed beginning to take another turn. Crossing a little court, I met the house steward, a personage whose will was absolute; yes, the lady abbess herself was obedient to his will. He rendered an account of his stewardship to none but the corregidor, on whom alone he was dependent, and whose confidence in him was unbounded. His name was Pedro Zendono, and the town of Salsedon in Biscay laid claim to the honor of his birth. Figure to yourself a tall man, with the complexion of a mummy and the bare anatomy of a dealer in mortification; he might have sat for the penitent thief in a picture of the crucifixion. He scarcely ever cast a carnal glance to-

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wards us Magdalens. You never saw such a face of rank hypocrisy in all your life, though you have spent some part of it under the same roof with the archbishop, and are not unacquainted with the clergy of his diocese.

But to return from this digression; . . . I met this Signor Zendono, who said to me slyly as he passed, Take comfort, my girl; I am sensibly affected with your wretched case. He said no more, and went on his way, leaving me to make my own comments on so concise and general a text. As he looked like a good man, and there was no positive evidence to set against his looks, I was simpleton enough to fancy that he had taken the trouble of inquiring why I was shut up, and meant, not finding me so atrocious a culprit as to deserve such shameful insults, to take my part with the corregidor. But I was not up to the tricks of the Biscayan; he had a much longer head. He was turning over in his mind the scheme of an elopement, and made the proposal to me in profound privacy some days afterwards. My dear Laura, said he, your sufferings have taken such deep possession of my mind that I have determined to end them. I am perfectly aware that my own ruin is involved in the measure, but needs must when the tender passion drives. To-morrow morning do I intend to take you out of prison, and conduct you in person to Madrid. No sacrifice is too great for the pleasure of being your deliverer.

I was very near fainting with surprise and joy at this promise of Zendono, who, concluding from my

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acknowledgments that my very life depended on my rescue, had the effrontery to carry me off next day in the face of the whole town, by the following device: He told the lady abbess that he had orders to take me before the corregidor, who was at his country box a few miles off; and, without betraying himself by a single change of countenance, packed me off with him for my companion, in a post-chaise drawn by two good mules, which he had bought for the occasion. Our only attendant was the driver, a servant of his own, and entirely devoted to the steward by stronger ties than those of gratitude. We began bowling away, not in the direction of Madrid, as I had taken for granted, but towards the frontiers of Portugal, whither we got in less time than it took the corregidor of Zamora to receive the deposition of our flight, and uncouple his pack or set them barking at our heels.

Before we entered Braganza, the Biscayan made me put on man's clothes, with which he had taken the precaution of providing himself. Reckoning on me as being fairly launched in the same boat with him, he said to me in the inn where we put up, Lovely Laura, do not take it unkindly of me to have brought you into Portugal. The corregidor of Zamora will make our own country too hot to hold us, for in his eyes we are two criminals, under the weight of whose enormities it is not for Spain to groan. But we may set his malice at defiance in this distant realm, though at the present conjuncture under the dominion of the Spanish monarchy. At least we

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shall stand a better chance for safety here than at home. League your fortunes with those of a man who would follow you in prosperity or in adversity through the world. Let us fix our residence at Coimbra. There I will get employed as a spy for the Inquisition; under the cover of that formidable tribunal — a refreshing shade for us, but Cimmerian darkness to its victims — our days will glide smoothly on in ease and pleasure, and we shall fatten on the spoil of religious delinquency.

A proposal so much to the point gave me to understand that I had to do with a knight who had other motives for officiating as the guardian of distressed damsels, besides the honor of chivalry. I saw at once that he reckoned much on my gratitude, and still more on my distress. Nevertheless, though these two pleas were almost equally eloquent in his favor, I rejected his addresses with disdain. The reason was that there were two advocates still more eloquent on the side of a refusal — a certainty that he was disagreeable, and a strong suspicion that he was poor. But when he returned to the charge, and offered to say the grace of matrimony before he fell to, proving to me at the same time, by the undeniable evidence of cash in hand, that his stewardship had enabled him to live in clover for a long time to come, the truth must come out in spite of blushes; my heart was softened, and my ears unstopped. I was dazzled by the gold and jewels which he laid out in burning row before me, and became a living monument, in my own person, that miraculous transfor-

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mations are effected by the power of pelf, as well as by the wand of love. My Biscayan became, by little and little, quite another sort of man in my eyes. His tall body and bare bones were plumped up into a shapely and commanding figure; his cadaverous complexion was improved into a manly brown; even that look, as if butter would not melt in his mouth, was no longer hypocrisy, but a staid and decent aspect. Having made these discoveries, I accepted his hand without any material abhorrence, and he plighted the usual vows in all due form. After this, like a good wife, I kept the spirit of contradiction as much as possible under the hatches. We resumed our journey, and Coimbra soon received a new family within its walls.

My husband stocked my wardrobe as became my sex and station, making me a present of several diamonds, among which I fixed my eye on that of Don Felix Maldonado. There were no further documents wanting to give a shrewd guess whence came all the precious stones I had seen, and to be morally certain that I had not married a troublesomely nice observer of the eighth article in the decalogue. Yet, considering myself as the main spring of all his little deviations from the strict law of propriety, it was not for me to judge harshly on that point. A woman can always find a palliation for the misdeeds which are set in motion by the power of her own beauty. But for that, he certainly would have ranked no higher than one of the wicked in my estimation.

I had no great reason to complain of him for two

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or three months. His attentions were always polite and kind, amounting apparently to a sincere and tender affection. But no such thing! These proofs of wedded love, this worshipping with the body, and endowing with the worldly goods, were all but a copy of his countenance; for the cheating fellow meant, as men serve a cucumber, to throw me away on the first opportunity. One morning, at my return from mass, I found nothing at home but the bare walls; the movables, not excepting my own apparel, every stick and every thread, had been carried off. Zendono and his faithful servant had taken their measures so adroitly, that in less than an hour the house had been completely gutted; so that with nothing but the gown upon my back, and Don Felix's ring, as good luck would have it, on my finger, here stood I, like another Ariadne, abandoned by the ungrateful rifler of my effects as well as of my charms. But you may take my word for it, I did not beguile the sense of my misfortunes in tragedy, elegy, scene individable, or poem unlimited. I rather fell upon my knees, and blessed my guardian angel for having delivered me from a rascal who must sooner or later fall into the hands of justice. The time we had passed together I considered in the light of a dead loss, and my spirits were all on the alert to make up for it. If I had been inclined to stay in Portugal, as a hanger-on to some woman of fashion, I should have found no difficulty in suiting myself; but whether it was patriotism, or some astrological conjunction, preparing a better fortune for me under

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the influence of the planets, my whole heart was bent on getting back into Spain. I applied to a jeweller, who valued my diamond and gave me cash for it, and then took my departure with an old Spanish lady who was going to Seville in a post-chaise.

This lady, whose name was Dorothea, had been to see a relation settled at Coimbra, and was on her return to Seville, where she lived. There was such a sympathy between us as made us fast friends on the very first day of our acquaintance; and the attachment grew so close while we travelled together, that the lady insisted, at our journey's end, on my making her house my home. I had no reason to repent having formed such a connection. Never was there a woman of a more charming character. One might still conclude, from the turn of her countenance, and from the spirit not yet quenched in her eyes, that in her youth the catgut of many a guitar must have been fretted under her window. As a proof of this, she had many trials what a state of widowhood was; her husbands had all been of noble birth, and her finances were flourishing on the accumulation of her several jointures.

Among other admirable qualities, she had that of not visiting severely the frailties of her own sex. When I let her into the secret of mine, she entered so warmly into my interests as to speak of Zendono with more sincerity than good manners. What graceless fellows these men are! said she, in a tone from which one might infer that she had met with some light-fingered steward in the passing of her

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accounts. They would not be worth picking off a dunghill, if one could do without them! There is a large fraternity of sorry scoundrels in the world, who make it their sport to gain the hearts of women, and then desert them. There is, however, one consoling circumstance, my dear child. According to your account, you are by no means bound fast to that faithless Biscayan. If your marriage with him was sufficiently formal to save your credit with the world, on the other hand, it was contracted loosely enough to admit of your trying your luck at a better match, whenever an opportunity may fall in your way.

I went out every day with Dorothea, either to church, or to visit among her friends; both likely occasions of picking up an adventure; so that I attracted the notice of several gentlemen. There were some of them who had a mind to feel how the land lay. They made their proposals to my venerable protectress; but these had not wherewithal to defray the expenses of an establishment, and those were mere unfledged boys under age; an insuperable objection, which left me very little merit in turning a deaf ear to them. One day a whim seized Dorothea and me to go and see a play at Seville. The bills announced a favorite and standard piece: El Embaxador de Si-mismo, written by Lope de Vega.

Among the actresses who came upon the stage, I discovered one of my old cronies. It was impossible to have forgotten Phenicia, that bouncing good-humored girl whom you have seen as Florimonde's waiting-maid, and have supped with more than once

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at Arsenia's. I was aware that Phenicia had left Madrid about two years ago, but had never heard of her turning actress. I longed so earnestly to embrace her, that the piece appeared quite tedious. Perhaps, too, there might be some fault in those who played it, as being neither good enough nor bad enough to afford me entertainment. For as to my own temper, which is that of seeking diversion wherever I can find it, I must confess that an actor supremely ridiculous answers my purpose just as well as the most finished performer of the age.

At last, the moment I had been waiting for being arrived, namely, the dropping of the curtain on this favorite and standard piece, we went—for my widow would go with me—behind the scenes, where we caught a glimpse of Phenicia, who was playing off the amiable and unaffected simpleton, and listening with all the primness of studied simplicity to the soft chirping of a young stagefinch, who had evidently suffered himself to be caught in the birdlime of her professional or meretricious talents. No sooner did her eye meet mine, than she quitted him with a genteel apology, ran up to me with open arms, and lavished upon me all the demonstrations of strong attachment imaginable. Our expressions of joy at this unexpected meeting were indeed reciprocal; but neither time nor place admitting of any very copious indulgence in the privilege of asking questions, we adjourned till the following day, with a promise of renewing our mutual inquiries thick and threefold, under the shelter of her friendly roof.

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The pleasure of talking is the inextinguishable passion of woman, coeval with the act of breathing. I could not get a wink of sleep all night for the burning desire of having a grapple with Phenicia, and closing in upon her in the conflict of curiosity. Witness, all the powers who preside over tattling, whether the love of lying in bed—another passion of woman—prevented me from getting up and flying to my appointment as early as good manners would allow. She lived with the rest of the company in a large, ready-furnished lodging. A female attendant who met me at entrance, on being requested to show me Phenicia's apartment, led the way up stairs to a gallery, along which were ranged ten or twelve small rooms, divided only by partitions of deal boards, and inhabited by this merry band. My conductress knocked at a door, which Phenicia opened; for her tongue was cruelly on the fidget to be let loose, as well as my own. We allowed ourselves no time for the impertinent ceremonies which usually usher in a visit, but plunged at once into a most furious career of loquacity. It seemed as if we should have a tight bout together. There were so many interrogatories to be bandied backwards and forwards, that question and answer rebounded like tennis-balls, only with tenfold velocity.

After having related our adventures each to other, and inquired into the actual condition of affairs, Phenicia asked me how I meant to provide for myself. My reply was, that I purposed, while waiting for something better, to get a situation with some

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young lady of quality. For shame! exclaimed my other self; you shall not think of such a thing. Is it possible, my darling, that you should not yet be disgusted with menial service? Are you not heartily sick of knocking under to the good or ill pleasure of others, of being cap-in-hand to all their caprices, and after all to be entertained with that unchangeable tune called a scolding—in a word, to be a downright slave? Why do not you follow my example, and turn your thoughts towards the stage? Nothing can be better suited to people of parts, when they happen not to be equally favored in the articles of wealth and birth. It is a sphere of life which holds a middle rank between the nobility and mere tradespeople; a profession exempted from all troublesome restraint, and raised far above the common prejudices of humble and decent society. The public are our bankers, and we draw upon them at sight. We live in a continual round of ecstasy, and spend our money to the full as fast as we earn it.

The theatre (for she went on at a great rate) is favorable above all to women. When I lived with Florimonde, — it is a misery to think of it, — I was reduced to take up with the supernumeraries of the prince's company; not a single man of fashion paid the least attention to my figure. How came that about? Because they never got a glimpse of it. The finest picture in the world may escape the admiration of the connoisseurs, if it is not placed in a proper light. But since I have been suitably framed and varnished, which could only happen in conse-

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quence of a theatrical finish, what a revolution! The finest young fellows of all the towns we pass through are shuffling at my heels. An actress, therefore, has all her little comforts about her, without deviating from the line of her duty. If she is discreet,—by which we mean that she should not admit more than one lover into her good graces at a time,—her exemplary conduct is cried up as without a parallel. She is called a very Niobe for her coldness; and when she changes her favorite, she is reprimanded as slightly by the world as a lawful widow who marries a few weeks too soon after the death of her first husband. If, however, the widow should look for luck in odd numbers, and take to herself a third, the contempt of all mankind is poured down on her devoted head; she is considered as a monster of indelicacy; whereas we happier women are so much the more in vogue, as we add to the list of our favorites. After having been served up to a hundred different lovers, some battered nobleman finds us a dainty dish for himself.

Do you mean that by way of news? interrupted I, as she uttered the last sentiment. Do you imagine me to be ignorant of these advantages? I have often conned them over in my mind, and they are but too alluring to a girl of my character. The attractions of the stage would be irresistible, were inclination all. But some little talent is indispensable, and I have not a spark. I have sometimes attempted to rehearse passages from plays before Arsenia. She was never satisfied with my perform-

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ance, and that disgusted me with the profession. You are easily put out of conceit with yourself, replied Phenicia. Do not you know that these great actresses are very apt to be jealous? With all their vanity, they are afraid lest some newer face should put them out of countenance. In short, I would not be guided by Arsenia on that subject; she did not give her real opinion. In my judgment, and without meaning to flatter you, the theatre is your natural element. You have admirable powers, free and graceful action, a fine-toned voice, volubility of declamation, and such a turn of countenance! Ah, you little rogue! you will bring all the young fellows behind the scenes, if once you take to the boards!

She plied me with many flattering compliments besides, and made me recite some lines, only by way of enabling me to form my own judgment as to my theatrical genius. Now that she was my censor, it seemed quite another thing. She praised me up to the skies, and held all the actresses in Madrid as mere makeweights in the scale. After such a testimony, it would have been inexcusable to hesitate about my own merit. Arsenia stood attainted, nay, convicted of jealousy and treachery. There could be no question about my being everything that was delightful. Two players happened to drop in by accident, and Phenicia prevailed on me to repeat the lines I had already spouted; they fell into a sort of enthusiastic trance, whence they were roused only to launch out fervently in admiration of me. Literally,

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had they all three been flattering me up for a wager, they could not have adopted a more extravagant scale of panegyric. My modesty was not proof against such praise from those who were themselves praised. I began to think myself really worthy of something; and now was my whole heart and soul turned towards a theatrical life.

Since this is the case, said I to Phenicia, the affair is determined. I will follow your advice, and engage in your company, if they will accept me. My friend, transported with joy at this proposal, clasped me in her arms; and her two companions seemed no less delighted than herself at finding me in that humor. It was settled that I should attend the theatre on the following day in the morning, and exhibit before the collected body the same sample of my talent as I had just displayed. If I had bought golden opinions from Phenicia and her friends, the actors in general were still more complimentary in their judgment, after I had recited but twenty lines before them. They gave me an engagement with the utmost willingness. Then there was nothing thought of but my first appearance. To make it as striking as possible, I laid out all the money remaining from the sale of my ring; and though my funds would not allow of being splendid in my dress, I discovered the art of substituting taste for glitter, and converting my poverty into a new grace.

At length I came out. What clapping of hands! what general admiration! It would be speaking faintly, my friend, to tell you downright that the

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spectators were all in an ecstasy. You must have heard with your own ears what a noise I made at Seville, to believe it. The whole talk of the town was about me, and the house was crowded for three weeks successively; so that this novelty restored the theatre to its popularity, when it was evidently beginning to decline. Thus did I come upon the stage, and step into public favor at once. But to come upon the stage with such distinction is generally a prelude to coming upon the town; or at least to putting one's self up at auction to the best bidder. Twenty sparks of all ages, from seventeen to seventy, were on the list of candidates, and would have worn me in my newest gloss. Had I followed my own inclination, I should have chosen the youngest, and the most of a lady's man; but in our profession, interest and ambition must bear the sway, till we have feathered our nest; that is as invariable a rule as any in the prompt-book. On this principle, Don Ambrosio de Nisana, a man in whom age and ugliness had done their worst, but rich, generous, and one of the most powerful noblemen in Andalusia, had the refusal of the bargain. It is true that he paid handsomely for it. He took a fine house for me, furnished it in the extreme of magnificence, allowed me a man cook of the first eminence, two footmen, a lady's maid, and a thousand ducats a month for my personal expenses. Add to all this a rich wardrobe, and an elegant assortment of jewels.

What a revolution in my affairs! My poor brain was completely turned. I could not believe myself

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to be the same person. No wonder if girls soon forget the meanness and misery whence some man of quality has rescued them in a fit of caprice. My confession shall be without reserve: public applause, flattering speeches buzzed about on every side, and Don Ambrosio's passion kindled such a flame of self-conceit as kept me in a continual ferment of extravagance. I considered my talents as a patent of nobility. I put on the woman of fashion, and becoming as chary as I had hitherto been lavish of my amorous challengers, determined to look no lower than dukes, counts, or marquises.

My lord of Nisana brought some of his friends to sup with me every evening. It was my care to invite the best companions among our actresses, and we wore away a good part of the night in laughing and drinking. I fell in very kindly with so delicious a life; but it lasted only six months. Men of rank are apt to be whimsical; but for that fault, they would be too heavenly. Don Ambrosio deserted me for a young coquette from Grenada, who had just brought a pretty person to the Seville market, and knew how to set off her wares to the best advantage. But I did not fret after him more than four-and-twenty hours. His place was supplied by a young fellow of two-and-twenty, Don Lewis d' Alcacer, with whom few Spaniards could vie in point of face and figure.

You will ask me, doubtless, and it is natural to do so, why I selected so green a sprig of nobility for my paramour, when my own experience so strongly

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dissuaded from such a choice. But, besides that Don Lewis had neither father nor mother, and was already in possession of his fortune, you are to know that there is no danger of disagreeable consequences attaching to any but girls in a servile condition of life, or those unfortunate loose fish who are game for every sportsman. Ladies of our profession are privileged persons; we let off our charms like a rocket, and are not answerable for the damage where they fall; so much the worse for those families whose heirs we set in a blaze.

As for Alcacer and myself, we were so strongly attached to one another, that I verily believe, Love never yet did such execution as when he took aim at us two. Our passion was of such a violent nature, that we seemed to be under the influence of some spell. Those who knew how well we were together, thought us the happiest pair in the world; but we, who knew best, found ourselves the most miserable. Though Don Lewis had as fine an outside as ever fell to the lot of man, he was at the same time so jealous, that there was no living for vexation at his unfounded surmises. It was of no use, knowing his weakness and humoring it, to lay an embargo on my looks, if ever a male creature peeped into harbor; his suspicious temper, seldom at a loss for some crime to impute, rendered my armed neutrality of no avail. Our most tender moments had always a spice of wrangling. There was no standing the brunt of it; patience could hold out no longer on either side, and we quarrelled more peaceably than

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we had loved. Could you believe that the last day of our being together was the happiest? Both equally wearied out by the perpetual recurrence of unpleasant circumstances, we gave a loose to our transports when we embraced for the last time. We were like two wretched captives, breathing the fresh air of liberty after all the horrors of our prison-house.

Since that adventure, I have worn a breastplate against the little archer. No more amorous nonsense for me, at least to a troublesome excess! It is quite out of our line to sigh and complain like Arcadian shepherdesses. Those should never give way to a passion in private, who hold it up to ridicule before the public.

While these events were passing in my domestic establishment, Fame had not hung her trumpet breathless on the willows; she spread it about universally that I was an inimitable actress. That celestial tattler, though bankrupt times out of number, still contrives to revive her credit; the comedians of Grenada therefore wrote to offer me an engagement in their company; and by way of evidence that the proposal was not to be scorned, they sent me a statement of their daily receipts and disbursements, with their terms, which seemed to be advantageous. That being the case, I closed, though grieved in my heart to part with Phenicia and Dorothea, whom I loved as well as woman is capable of loving woman. I left the first laudably employed in melting the plate of a little haggling goldsmith,

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whose vanity so far got the better of his avarice that he must needs have a theatrical heroine for his mistress. I forgot to tell you that on my translation to the stage, from mere whim, I changed the name of Laura to that of Estella; and it was under the latter name that I took this engagement at Grenada.

My first appearance was no less successful here than at Seville; and I soon felt myself wafted along by the sighs of my admirers. But resolving not to favor any except on honorable terms, I kept a guard of modesty in my intercourse with them, which threw dust in their eyes. Nevertheless, not to be the dupe of virtues which pay very indifferently, and were not exactly at home in their new mansion, I was balancing whether or not to take up with a young fellow of mean extraction, who had a place under government, and assumed the style of a gentleman in virtue of his office, with a good table and handsome equipage, when I saw the Marquis de Marialva for the first time. This Portuguese nobleman, travelling over Spain from mere curiosity, stopped at Grenada as he passed through it. He came to the play. I did not perform that evening. His examination of the actresses was very particular, and he found one to his liking. Their acquaintance commenced on the very next day; and the definitive treaty was very nearly concluded when I appeared upon the stage. What with some personal graces, and no little affectation in setting them off, the weather-cock veered about all on a sudden; my Portuguese was mine, and mine only, till death do us

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part. Yet, since the truth must be told, I knew perfectly that my sister of the sock and buskin had entrapped this nobleman, and spared no pains to chouse her out of her prize; to my success you are yourself a witness. She bears me no small grudge on that account; but the thing could not be avoided. She ought to reflect that it is the way of all female flesh; that the dearest friends play off the same trick upon one another, and put a good face upon it into the bargain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECEPTION OF GIL BLAS AMONG THE PLAYERS AT GRENADA; AND ANOTHER OLD ACQUAINTANCE PICKED UP IN THE GREEN-ROOM.

JUST as Laura was finishing her story, there came in an old actress who lived in her neighborhood, and was come to take her to the theatre as she passed by. This venerable tutelary of the stage was admirably fitted to play some superannuated strumpet among the heathen goddesses in a pantomime. My sister was not remiss in introducing her brother to that stale old harridan, whereupon a profusion of compliments was bandied about on both sides.

I left them together, telling the steward's relict that I would join her again at the playhouse, as soon as I had sent my baggage to the Marquis de Marialva's, to whose residence she directed me. First I went to the room I had hired, whence, after having

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settled with my landlady, I repaired with a porter who carried my luggage to a large ready-furnished house, where my new master was quartered. At the door I met his steward, who asked me if I was not the lady Estella's brother. I answered in the affirmative. Then you are welcome, Signor Cavalier, replied he. The Marquis de Marialva, whose steward I have the honor to be, has commissioned me to receive you properly. There is a room got ready for you; I will show you the way to it, if you please, that you may be quite at home. He took me up to the top of the house, and thrust me into so small a room, that a very narrow bed, a chest of drawers, and two chairs completely filled it. This was my apartment. You will not have much spare room, said my conductor, but as a set-off, I promise you that you shall be superbly lodged at Lisbon. I locked up my portmanteau in the wardrobe, and put the key in my pocket, asking at the same time what was the hour of supper. The answer was, that his lordship seldom supped at home, but allowed each servant a monthly sum for board wages. I put several other questions, and learned that the marquis's people were a happy set of idle fellows. After a conversation short and sweet, I left the steward to go and look for Laura, reflecting, much to my own satisfaction, on the happy omens I drew from the opening of my new situation.

As soon as I got to the playhouse door, and mentioned my name as Estella's brother, there was free admission at once. You might have observed the

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forwardness of the guards to make way for me, just as if I had been one of the most considerable noblemen in Grenada. All the supernumeraries, doorkeepers, and receivers of checks whom I encountered in my progress, made me their very best bows. But what I should like best to give the reader an idea of is the serious reception which the merry vagrants gave me in the green-room, where I found the whole dramatis personæ ready dressed, and on the point of drawing up the curtain. The actors and actresses, to whom Laura introduced me, fell upon me without mercy. The men were quite troublesome with their greetings; and the women, not to be outdone, laid their plastered faces alongside of mine, till they covered it with a villanous compound of red and white. No one choosing to be the last in making me welcome, they all paid their compliments in a breath. Æolus himself, answering from all the points of the compass at once, would not have been a match for them: but my sister was; for the loan of her tongue was always at the service of a friend, and she brought me completely out of debt.

But I did not get clear off with the squeezes of the principal performers. The civilities of the scene-painters, the band, the prompter, the candle-snuffer, and the call-boy were to be endured with patience; all the understrappers in the theatre came to see me run the gantlet. One would have supposed one's self in a foundling hospital, and that they had none of them ever known what sort of animals brothers and sisters were.

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In the mean time the play began. Some gentlemen, who were behind the scenes, then ran to get seats in the front of the house: for my part, feeling myself quite at home, I continued in conversation with those of the actors who were waiting to go on. Among the number there was one whom they called Melchior. The name struck me. I looked hard at the person who answered to it, and thought I had seen him somewhere. At last I recollected that it was Melchior Zapata, a poor strolling player, who has been described, in the first volume of this true history, as soaking his crusts in the pure element.

I immediately took him aside, and said, I am much mistaken if you are not that Signor Melchior with whom I had the honor of breakfasting one day by the margin of a clear fountain, between Valladolid and Segovia. I was with a journeyman barber. We had some provisions with us which we clubbed with yours, and all three partook of a little rural feast, to which wit and anecdote gave additional relish. Zapata bethought him for a minute or two, and then answered, You tell me of a circumstance which often since came across my mind. I had then just been trying my fortune at Madrid, and was returning to Zamora. I recollect perfectly that my affairs were a little out at elbows. I recollect it too, replied I, by the token of a doublet which you wore, lined with play-bills. Neither have I forgotten that you complained of having a wife cursed with incorruptible chastity. O! that misfortune has found its remedy long ago, said Zapata, shaking his ears. By all the

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powers of womanhood, the jade has effectually reformed that virtue, and given me a warmer lining to my doublet.

I was going to congratulate him on his wife's having shown so much sense, when he was obliged to leave me and go on the stage. Being curious to know what sort of an animal his wife was, I went up to an actor and desired him to point her out. He did so, saying at the same time, There she is; it is Narcissa—the prettiest of all our women except your sister. I concluded that this must be the actress in whose favor the Marquis de Marialva had declared before meeting with his Estella; and my conjecture was but too correct. After the play, I attended Laura home, where I saw several cooks preparing a handsome entertainment. You may sup here, said she. I will do no such thing, answered I: the marquis perhaps will like to be alone with you. Not at all, replied she; he is coming with two of his own friends and one of our gentlemen; you will just make the sixth. You know that in our free and easy way there is no impropriety in secretaries sitting down at table with their masters. Very true, said I; but it is rather too soon to assume the privilege of a favorite. I must first get employed in some confidential commission, and then lay in my claim to that honorable distinction. Judging it to be so best, I went out of Laura's house, and got back to my inn, whither I reckoned on repairing every day, since my master had no regular establishment.

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CHAPTER IX.

AN EXTRAORDINARY COMPANION AT SUPPER; AND AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR CONVERSATION.

I REMARKED in the coffee-room a sort of an old monk, habited in coarse gray cloth, at supper, quite alone in a corner. I went and sat opposite to him out of curiosity; we exchanged a civil bow, and he showed himself to be quite as well bred as I was, notwithstanding my lay education. My commons were brought me, and I fell to with a very catholic appetite. While I was eating, my tongue was mute, but my eyes glanced by snatches towards this singular character, and always caught his at the same employment. Liking better to stare than be stared at, I addressed my speech to him thus: Pray, father, have we ever by any chance met anywhere but here? You peer at me as if you scarcely knew whether I was an acquaintance or a stranger. He answered gravely, If I look at you with fixed attention, it is only to admire the prodigious variety of adventures which are chronicled in the features of your face. It should seem, said I, in a joking tone, as if your reverence was something of a physiognomist. Far more deeply imbued in science than a mere physiognomist, answered the monk, I found prophecies on my observations which have never been belied by the event. My skill in palmistry is no less, and I will set my oracles against the surest of antiquity, after comparing the inspection of the hand with that of the face.

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Though this old man had all the appearance of profound wisdom, his talk was so like that of a madman, that I could not help laughing at him outright. So far from being offended at my want of manners, he smiled at it, and went on to the following effect, after running his eye round the coffee-room, to be assured that there were no listeners: I am not surprised at finding you so prejudiced against two sciences which pass at this time of day for mere frivolity; the long and painful study they require disheartens the learned, who turn their backs upon them, and then swear that they are fables, out of disgust at having missed their attainment. For my part, I am not to be frightened by the darkness which envelops them, any more than by the difficulties which are perpetual stumbling-blocks in the pursuit of chemical discoveries, and in the marvellous art of transmuting baser metals into gold.

But I do flatter myself, pursued he, looking steadfastly at me, that I am addressing a young gentleman of good sense, to whom my systems will not appear altogether in the light of idle dreams. A sample of my skill will dispose you better than the most subtile arguments to pass a favorable judgment on my pretensions. After talking in this manner he drew from his pocket a phial full of a lively-looking red liquor, on which he expatiated thus: Here is an elixir which I have distilled this morning from the juices of certain plants; for I have employed almost my whole life, like Democritus, in finding out the properties of simples and minerals. You shall make

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trial of its virtue. The wine we are drinking with our supper is very bad; henceforth it will become excellent. At the same time he put two drops of his elixir into my bottle, which made my wine more delicious than the choicest vintages of Spain.

The marvellous strikes the imagination; and when once that faculty is enlisted, judgment is turned adrift. Delighted with so glorious a secret, and persuaded that he must have outdeviled the devil before he could have got at it, I cried out in a paroxysm of admiration, O reverend father! prithee forgive your servant if he took you at first for an old blockhead. I now abjure my error. There is no need to look further to be assured that it depends only on your own will to turn an iron bar into a wedge of gold in the twinkling of an eye. How happy should I be were I master of that admirable science! Heaven preserve you from ever acquiring it, interrupted the old man, with a deep sigh. You know not, my son, what a fatal possession you covet. Instead of envying, rather pity me, for having taken such infinite pains to be made unhappy. I am always disturbed in mind. I fear a discovery; and then perpetual imprisonment would be the reward of all my labors. In this apprehension, I lead a vagabond life, sometimes disguised as a priest or monk, sometimes as a gentleman or a peasant. Where is the benefit of knowing how to manufacture gold on such terms? Are not the goods of this world downright misery to those who cannot enjoy them in tranquillity?

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What you say appears to me very sensible, said I to the philosopher. There is nothing like living at one's ease. You have rid me of all hankering after the philosopher's stone. I will rest satisfied with learning from you my future destiny. With all my heart, my good lad, answered he. I have already made my remarks upon your features; now let me see your hand. I gave it him with a confidence which will do my penetration but little credit in the esteem of some readers. He examined it very attentively, and then pronounced, as in a rapture of inspiration, Ah! what transitions from pain to pleasure, and from pleasure to pain! What a whimsical alternation of good and evil chances! But you have already experienced the largest share of your allotted reverses. You have but few more tides of misfortune to stem, and then a great lord will contrive for you an eligible fate, which shall not be subject to change.

After having assured me that I might depend on his prediction, he bade me farewell, and went out of the inn, leaving me in deep meditation on the things I had just heard. There could be no doubt of the Marquis de Marialva being the great lord in question; and consequently nothing appeared more within the verge of possibility than the accomplishment of the oracle. But though there had not been the slightest likelihood, that would have been no hinderance to giving the impostor monk unbounded credit, since his elixir had transmuted my sour incredulity into the most tractable digestion of his

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falsehoods. That nothing might be wanting on my side to play into the hands of my foreboded luck, I determined to attach myself more closely to the marquis than I had ever done to any of my masters. Having taken this resolution, I went home in unusually high spirits: never did foolish woman descend in better humor from the garret of another foolish woman who had told her fortune.

CHAPTER X.

THE MARQUIS DE MARIALVA GIVES A COMMISSION TO GIL BLAS. THAT FAITHFUL SECRETARY ACQUITS HIMSELF OF IT AS SHALL BE RELATED.

The marquis was not yet returned from his theatrical party, and I found his upper servants playing at cards in his apartment while they were waiting for his arrival. I got to be sociable with them, and we amused ourselves with jocular conversation till two o'clock in the morning, when our master arrived. He was a little surprised at seeing me, and said, with an air of kindness, which made me conclude that he came home very well satisfied with his evening, How is this, Gil Blas? Are you not gone to bed yet? I answered that I wished to know first whether he had any commands for me. Probably, replied he, I may have a commission to give you to-morrow morning; but it will be time enough

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then to acquaint you with my wishes. Go to your own room, and henceforward remember that I dispense with your attendance at bed-time; my other servants are sufficient for that occasion.

After this hint, which was much to my satisfaction in the main, since it spared me a slavery which I should have felt very unpleasantly at times, I left the marquis in his apartment, and withdrew to my garret. I went to bed. Not being able to sleep, it seemed good to follow the counsel of Pythagoras, and to examine all the actions of the day by the test of reason; to reprimand severely what had been done amiss, and if any thing had been done well, to rejoice in it.

On looking into the day-book of my conscience, the balance was not sufficiently in my favor to keep me in good humor with myself. I felt remorse at having lent myself to Laura's imposition. It was in vain to urge, in self-defence, that I could not, with any decency, give the lie to a girl who had no object in view but to do me a pleasure, and that I was in some sort under the necessity of becoming an accomplice in the fraud. This was a paltry excuse in the darkness of the night, for I pleaded against myself that at all events the matter should be pushed no farther, and that it was the summit of impudence to remain upon the establishment of a nobleman whose confidence I so ill repaid. In short, after a severe trial, it was agreed in my own breast, that I was very little short of an arrant knave.

But to have done with the morality of the act,

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and pass on to the probable issue, it was evidently playing a desperate game, to cozen a man of consequence, who might be enabled, as an instrument for the visitation of my sins perhaps, to detect the imposture in its very infancy. A reflection at once so prudent and so virtuous acted as a refrigerator on my spirits; but visions of pleasure and of interest soon raised them again above the freezing point. Besides, the prophecy of the man with the elixir would have been enough to put me in heart once more. I therefore gave myself up to the indulgence of the most agreeable fancies. All the rules of arithmetic, from simple addition to compound interest, were set in array, to cast up what sum my salary would amount to at the end of ten years' service. Then there was a large allowance for presents and gratuities from my master, whose liberal disposition according admirably with my liberal desires, my imagination grew quite fantastical, and extended the landmarks of my fortune over innumerable acres of unsubstantial territory. Sleep overtook me in the calculation, and raised a magnificent aërial mansion on the estate, where a new race of grandees was to originate. I got up the next morning about eight o'clock to go and receive my patron's orders; but as I was opening my door to go out, what was my surprise at meeting him in his wrapping-gown and night-cap! He was quite alone. Gil Blas, said he, on parting with your sister last night, I promised to pass this morning with her; but an affair of consequence will not admit of my keeping my word. Go

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and assure her from me that I am deeply mortified at the disappointment, but that I shall certainly sup with her to-night. That is not all, added he, putting a purse into my hands and a little shagreen case set round with diamonds; carry her my portrait, and keep this purse of fifty pistoles, which I give you as a mark of my early-conceived friendship. I took the picture in one hand, and in the other the purse to which I was so little entitled. I put my best leg foremost in my way to Laura, muttering to myself, in the transports of excessive joy, Good! the prophecy is accomplished in the twinkling of an eye. What a windfall, to be the brother of a girl so full of beauty and attraction! It is a pity the credit attached to the relationship is not commensurate with the lucre and the comfort.

Laura, unlike most women in her profession, had a habit of early rising. I caught her at her toilet, where, while waiting for her illustrious foreigner, she was ingrafting on her natural beauty all the adventitious charms which the cosmetic art could supply. Lovely Estella, said I, on accosting her, thou absolute loadstone of the tramontanes, I may now sit down at table with my master, since he has honored me with a commission which gives me that prerogative, and which I am just come to fulfil. He cannot have the pleasure of waiting on you this morning, as he had purposed; but, to make you amends for the disappointment, he will sup here this evening, and sends you his picture, which, to all appearance, is enclosed in something more valuable than itself.

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I put the box into her hand at once, and the lively sparkling of the brilliants which encompassed it made her eyes sparkle and her mouth water. She opened it out of mere curiosity, looked carelessly at the painting, as people perform a duty for which they have little relish, then shut it, and once more fell greedily on the jewelry. Their beauty made her eloquent, and she said to me, with the smile of a satirist, These are copies which those mercenary things called actresses value much more highly than originals.

I next acquainted her that the generous Portuguese, when giving me charge of the portrait, recommended it to my care by a purse of fifty pistoles. I beg you will accept of my congratulations, said she; this nobleman begins where it is even uncommon for others to leave off. It is to you, my divine creature, answered I, that this present is owing; the marquis only made it on the score of natural affection. I could be well pleased, replied she, that he were to make you a score such presents every day. I cannot express in what extravagance you are dear to me. From the first moment of our meeting, I became attached to you by so strong a tie, as time has not been able to dissolve. When I lost you at Madrid, I did not despair of finding you again; and yesterday, on your sudden appearance, I received you like a deodand. In a word, my friend, heaven has created us for one another. You shall be my husband, but we must get plenty of money in the first instance. I shall just lend myself out to three

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or four silly fellows more, and then you may live like a gentleman on your means.

I thanked her in the most appropriate terms for such an instance of extreme condescension on my behalf, and we got insensibly into a conversation which lasted till noon. At that hour I withdrew, to go and give my master an account of the manner in which his present was received. Though Laura had given me no instructions thereupon, I was not remiss in composing a fine compliment on my way, with which I meant to launch out on her part; but it was just so much flash in the pan. For, when I got home the marquis was gone out; and the fates had decreed that I should never see him more, for reasons which will be methodically stated in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

A THUNDERBOLT TO GIL BLAS.

I REPAIRED to my inn, where meeting with two men of companionable talents, I dined and sat at table with them till the play began. We parted; they as their business and desire pointed them, and, for my own part, my bent was towards the theatre. It may be proper to observe, by the way, that I had all possible reason to be in a good humor. The conversation with my chance companions had been joyous in the extreme; the color of my fortune was gay

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and animating; yet for all that I could not help giving way to melancholy, without either knowing why, or being able to reason myself out of it. It was doubtless a prophetic warning of the misfortune which threatened me.

As I entered the green-room, Melchior Zapata came up, and told me, in a low voice, to follow him. He led me to an unfrequented part of the house, and opened his business thus: Worthy sir, I make it a point of conscience to give you a very serious warning. You are aware that the Marquis de Marialva had at first taken a fancy to Narcissa, my wife; he had even gone so far as to fix a day for trying the relish of my rib, when that cockatrice Estella contrived to flyblow the bill of fare, and transfer the banquet to her own untainted charms. Judge, then, whether an actress can be gulled instead of gulling, and preserve the sweetness of her temper. My wife has taken it deeply to heart, and there is no species of revenge to which she would not have recourse. A fine opportunity has offered. Yesterday, if you recollect, all our supernumeraries were crowding together to see you. The deputy candle-snuffer told some of the inferior comedians that he recollected you perfectly well, and that you might be anything but Estella's brother.

This report, added Melchior, came to Narcissa's ears to-day: she lost no time in questioning the author; and that grub of the interior stood to the whole story. He says that he knew you as Arsenia's servant, when Estella waited on her at Madrid under

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the name of Laura. My wife, full of glee at this discovery, means to acquaint the Marquis de Marialva with it, when he comes to the play this evening; so take your measures accordingly. If you are not Estella's brother in good earnest, I would advise you as a friend, and on the score of old acquaintance, to make your escape while your skin is whole. Narcissa, satisfied in her tender mercy with only one victim, and that of her own sex, has allowed me to give you this notice, that you may outrun your ill luck.

It would have been waste of words to press the subject farther. I returned thanks for the caution to this fretter of his hour, who saw by my terrified aspect that I was not the man to give the deputy candle-snuffer the lie. I did not feel the least temptation to carry my dangerous valor such a length. I had not even the heart to go and bid farewell to Laura, for fear she should insist on my keeping up the farce. I could easily conceive that so excellent an actress might get out of the scrape with flying colors; but there seemed to be nothing for me short of a swingeing castigation; and I was not so far gone in love as to stand by my sweetheart at the risk of my own person. I thought of nothing but a precipitate retreat with my household gods, or rather goods, if such a trumpery collection of individual property might be called so. I disappeared from the playhouse in the twinkling of an eye; and, in less time than it would have taken to confess my sins, was my portmanteau carried off and safely lodged with a

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muleteer who was to set out for Toledo at three o'clock next morning. I could have wished myself already with the Count de Polan, whose hospitable roof seemed my only safe asylum. But I was not there yet; and it was impossible to think without dread of the time remaining to be passed in a town where I was afraid they would hunt me out without giving me a night's law.

The smell of supper drew me to my inn notwithstanding; though I was as uneasy as a debtor who knows that a writ is out against him. My stomach, I believe, was not sufficiently well knit that evening for my supper to play its part as it should do. The miserable sport of fear, I watched all the people who came into the coffee-room, and whenever by chance they carried a gallows in their physiognomy,—which is no uncommon ensign in such places of resort,—I shuddered with horrid forebodings. After having supped the supper of the damned, I got up from table and returned to my carrier's house, where I threw myself on some clean straw till it was time to set out.

My patience was well tried during that interval; for a thousand unpleasant thoughts attacked me in all directions. If I dozed now and then, the enraged marquis stood before me, pounding Laura's fair face to a jelly with his fist, and turning her whole house out at window; or, to come nearer home, I heard him giving directions for my death under the operation of a cudgel. At such a vision I started out of my sleep, and waking, which is

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usually so pleasant after a frightful dream, inspired me with more horror than even the fictions of my entranced fancy.

Happily the muleteer delivered me from so dire a purgatory, by coming to acquaint me that his mules were ready. I was immediately on my legs, and set out radically cured, for which heaven has my best thanks, of Laura and the occult sciences. As we got farther from Grenada, my mind recovered its tone. I began chatting with the muleteer, laughed at his droll stories, and insensibly lost all my apprehensions. I slept undisturbed at Ubeda, where we lay the first night, and on the fourth day we got to Toledo. My first care was to inform myself of the Count de Polan's residence, whither I repaired under the full persuasion that he would not suffer me to lodge elsewhere. But I reckoned without my host. There was no one at home but a person to take care of the house, who told me that his master was just gone to the castle of Leyva, having been sent for on account of Seraphina's dangerous illness.

The count's absence was altogether unexpected: here was no longer any inducement to stay at Toledo, and all my plans were changed at once. Finding myself so near Madrid, I resolved to go thither. It came into my head that I might make my way at court, where talents of the first order, as I had heard, were not absolutely necessary to fill situations of the first consequence. On the very next morning I took advantage of back carriage, to be set down in the renowned capital of Spain. Fortune took me kindly

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by the hand, and introduced me to a higher cast of parts than those I had hitherto filled.

CHAPTER XII.

GIL BLAS TAKES LODGINGS IN A READY-FURNISHED HOUSE. HE GETS ACQUAINTED WITH CAPTAIN CHINCHILLA. THAT OFFICER'S CHARACTER AND BUSINESS AT MADRID.

On my first arrival at Madrid, I fixed my head-quarters in a lodging-house, where resided, among other persons, an old captain, who was come from the distant part of New Castille, to solicit a pension at court, and he thought his claims but too well founded. His name was Don Annibal de Chinchilla. It was not without much staring that I saw him for the first time. He was a man about sixty, of gigantic stature, and of anatomical leanness. His whiskers were like brushwood, fencing off the two sides of his face as high as his temples. Besides that, he was short in his reckoning by an arm and a leg; there was a vacancy for an eye, which Polypheme would have supplied as he did, had patches of green silk been then in the fashion; and his features were hacked sufficiently to illustrate a treatise of geometry. With these exceptions, his configuration was much like that of another man. As to his mental qualities, he was not altogether without understanding; and what he wanted in quickness he made up by gravity. His principles were rigid in

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the extreme; and it was his particular boast to be delicate on the point of honor.

After two or three interviews, he distinguished me by his confidence. I soon got into all his personal history: he related on what occasions he had left an eye at Naples, an arm in Lombardy, and a leg in the Low Countries. The most admirable circumstance in all his narratives of battles and sieges was, that not a single feature of the swaggerer peeped out; not a word escaped him to his own honor and glory; though one could readily have forgiven him for making some little display of the half which was still extant of himself, as a set-off against the dilapidations which had deducted so largely from the usual contexture of a man. Officers who return from their campaigns without a scratch upon their skin, or a love-lock out of place, are not always so humble in their pretensions.

But he told me that what gave him most uneasiness was the having wasted a considerable portion of his private fortune on military objects, so that he had not more than a hundred ducats a year left—a poor establishment for such a pair of whiskers, a gentleman's lodging, and an amanuensis to multiply memorials by wholesale. For, in point of fact, my worthy friend, added he, shrugging his shoulders, I present one, with a blessing on my endeavors, every day, and the last meets with the same attention as the first. You would say that it was an even bet between the prime minister and me, which of us two shall be tired first, the memorialist or the receiver

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of the memorials. I have often had the honor, too, of addressing the king on the same subject; but the rector and his curate say grace in the same key; and in the mean time my castle of Chinchilla is falling to ruin for want of necessary repairs.

Faint heart never won fair lady, said I most wisely to the captain; you are perhaps on the eve of finding all your marches and countermarches repaid with usury. I must not flatter myself with that pleasing expectation, answered Don Annibal. It is but three days since I spoke to one of the minister's secretaries; and if I am to trust his representations, I have only to hold up my head and look big. What, then, did he say to you? replied I. Had those poor dumb mouths, your wounds, no eloquence to wring a hireling pittance for their profuse expense of blood? You shall judge for yourself, resumed Chinchilla. This secretary told me in good plain terms, My honest friend, you need not boast so much of your zeal and your fidelity; you have only done your duty in exposing yourself to danger for your country. Naked glory is the true and honorable recompense of gallant actions, and as such is the prize at which a Spaniard aims. You therefore argue on false principles, if you consider the bounty you solicit as a debt. In case it should be granted, you will owe that favor exclusively to the royal goodness, which, in its extreme condescension, requites those of its subjects who have served the state valiantly. Thus you see, pursued the captain, that if I had a hundred lives, they are all pledged, and that I am likely to go back as hungry as I came.

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A brave man in distress is the most touching object in this world. I exhorted him to stick close, and offered to write his memorials out fair for nothing. I even went so far as to open my purse to him, and to beg it as a favor that he would draw upon me for whatever he wanted. But he was not one of those folks who never wait to be asked twice on such occasions. So much the reverse, that with a commendable delicacy on the subject, he thanked me for my kindness, but refused it peremptorily. He afterwards told me that, for fear of sponging upon any one, he had accustomed himself, by little and little, to live with such sobriety, that the smallest quantity of food was sufficient for his subsistence; which was but too true. His daily fare was confined to vegetables, by dint whereof his component parts were confined to skin and bone. That he might have no witnesses how ill he dined, he usually shut himself up in his chamber at that meal. I prevailed so far with him, however, by repeated entreaties, as to obtain that we should dine and sup together; then, undermining his pride by little indirect artifices of compassion, I ordered more provision and wine than I could consume to my own share. I pressed him to eat and drink. At first he made difficulties about it; but in the end there was no resisting my hospitality. After a time, his modesty becoming fainter as his diet was more flush, he helped me off with my dinner and lightened my bottle almost without asking.

One day, after four or five glasses, when his

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stomach had renewed its intimacy with a more generous system of feeding, he said to me with an air of gayety, Upon my word, Signor Gil Blas, you have very winning ways with you; you make me do just whatever you please. There is something so hearty in your welcome as to relieve me from all fear of trespassing on your generous temper. My captain seemed at that moment so entirely to have got rid of his bashfulness, that if I had been in the humor to have seized the lucky moment, and to have pressed my purse once more on his acceptance, I am much mistaken if he would have refused it. I did not put him to the trial, but rested satisfied with having made him my messmate, and taken the trouble not only to copy out his memorials, but to assist him in their composition. By dint of having written homilies out fair, I had learned the knack of phraseology, and was become a sort of author. The old officer, on his side, had some little vanity about writing well. Both of us thus contending for the prize, the bursts of eloquence would have done honor to the most celebrated professors of Salamanca. But it was in vain that we sat on opposite sides of the table, and drained our genius to the very dregs, to nourish the flowers of rhetoric in these memorials; you might as well have planted an orange-grove on the sea-beach. In whatever new light we placed Don Annibal's services, it was all the same at court, the connoisseurs were decided about their merit; so that the battered veteran had no reason to sing the praises of that spirit which leads officers on to spend

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their family estates in the service. In the virulence of his spleen he cursed the planet under which he was born, and sent Naples, Lombardy, and the Low Countries to the devil.

That his mortification might be pressed down and running over, it happened to his face one day that a poet, introduced by the Duke of Alva, having recited a sonnet before the king on the birth of an infanta, was gratified with a pension of five hundred ducats. I believe the lop-limbed captain would have gone raving mad at it, if I had not taken some pains to recompense his spirit. What is the matter with you? said I, seeing him quite beside himself. There is nothing in all this which ought to go so terribly against the grain. Ever since Mount Parnassus swelled above the subject plain, have not poets pleaded the privilege of laying princes under contribution to their muse? There is not a crowned head in Christendom that has not substituted a pensioned laureate for the household fool of less refined times. And between ourselves, this species of patronage, for the most part, galloping down full drive to posterity on the saddle of Pegasus, raises a hue and cry in honor of royal munificence; but bounty to persons who are lost in a crowd, however deserving, adds nothing to the bulk or stature of posthumous renown. Augustus must have drained his treasury by gratuities, and yet how few of the names on his pension list have come down to us! But distant ages shall be informed, as we are, in all the hyperbole of poetic diction, that his benefits

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descended on Virgil like the rain from heaven, whose drops arithmetic has no combinations to count, no principles by which to reason on their number.

But let me talk ever so classically to Don Annibal, there was a confounded acidity in that sonnet which curdled all the milky ingredients of his moral composition; it was impossible to chew, swallow, and digest such food with human organs; and he was fully determined to give the matter up at once. It seemed right, nevertheless, by way of playing for his last stake, to present one more memorial to the Duke of Lerma, and if that failed there was an end of the game. For this purpose we went together to the prime minister's. There we met a young man, who, after saluting the captain, said to him in a tone of affection, My old and dear master, is it your own self that I see? What business brings you to this mart of favor? If you have occasion for any one to speak a good word for you, do not spare my lungs; they are entirely at your service. How is this, Pedrillo? answered the officer; to hear you talk, it should seem as if you held some important post in this house. At least, replied the young man, I have influence enough here to put an honest rustic like you into the right train. That being the case, resumed the captain with a smile, I place myself under your protection. I accept the pledge, rejoined Pedrillo. You have only to acquaint me with your particular taste, and I engage to give you a savory slice out of the ministerial pasty.

We had no sooner opened our minds to this young

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fellow, so full of kind assurances, than he inquired where Don Annibal resided; then, promising that we should hear from him on the following day, he vanished without informing us what he meant to do, or even telling us whether he belonged to the Duke of Lerma's household. I was curious to know what this Pedrillo was, whose turn of mind appeared to be so brisk and active. He is a brave lad, said the captain, who waited on me some years ago, but finding me out at elbows, went away in search of a better service. There was no offence to me in all that; it is very natural to change when one cannot be worse off. The creature is pleasant enough, not deficient in parts, and happy in a spirit of intrigue which would wheedle with the devil. But notwithstanding all his fine pretence, I am not sanguine in my reckoning on the zeal he has just testified for me. Perhaps, said I, there may be some plausibility in his designs. Should he be a retainer, for example, to any of the duke's principal officers, it will be in his power to serve you. You have lived too long in the world not to know that in great houses every thing is done by party and cabal; that the masters are governed by two or three upper servants about their persons, who, in their turn, are governed by that multitude of menials attendant upon them.

On the next morning we saw Pedrillo at our breakfast table. Gentlemen, said he, if I did not explain myself yesterday as to my means of serving Captain Chinchilla, it was because we were not in a place where such a communication could be made

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with safety. Besides, I was disposed to ascertain whether the thing was feasible, before you were made parties in it. Understand, then, that I am the confidential servant of Signor Don Rodrigo de Calderona, the Duke of Lerma's first secretary. My master, who is much addicted to women, goes almost every evening to sup with a little Arragonian nightingale, whom he keeps in a cage near the purlieus of the court. She is quite a young girl from Albarazin, a most lovely creature. She has some wit as well as beauty, and sings enchantingly; they call her the Spanish Siren. I am the bearer of some tender inquiries every morning, and am just come from her. I have proposed to her to pass off Signor Don Annibal for her uncle, and the object of the forgery is to engage her lover in his interests. She is very willing to lend her aid in the business. Besides some little commission to which she looks forward on the profits, it will tickle her vanity to be taken for the niece of a military man.

Signor de Chinchilla looked very grim at this suggestion. He declared his extreme abhorrence of becoming a party concerned in a mere swindling trick, and still more of adopting a female adventurer, no better than she should be, into his family, and thus casting a stain upon its immaculate purity. It was not only for himself that he felt all this soreness; there was a recoil of ignominy on his ancestors, which would lay their honors level with the dust. This morbid delicacy seemed out of season to Pedrillo, who could not help expressing his contempt

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of it thus: You must surely be out of your wits to take the matter up on that footing. A fine market you bring your morals to, you dictators from the plough, with your ridiculous squeamishness! Now you seem a good sensible man, appealing to me as he spoke these last words. Can you believe your ears when you hear such scruples advanced? Heaven defend us! At court, of all the places in the world, to look at morals through a microscope! Let Fortune come under what haggard form she may, they hug her in their arms, and swear she is a beauty.

My way of thinking was precisely with Pedrillo, and we dinned it so stoutly into both the captain's ears, as to make him the Spanish Siren's uncle against nature and inclination. When we had so far prevailed over his pride, we all three set about drawing up a new memorial for the minister, which was revised, with a copious interlacing of additions and corrections. I then wrote it out fair, and Pedrillo carried it to the Arragonian chantress, who that very evening put it into the hands of Signor Don Rodrigo, telling her story so artlessly that the secretary, really supposing her the captain's niece, promised to take up his case. A few days afterwards we reaped the fruits of our little project. Pedrillo came back to our house with the lofty air of a benefactor. Good news, said he to Chinchilla. The king is going to make a new grant of officers, places, and pensions; nor will your name be forgotten in the list. But I am specially commissioned to inquire what present you purpose making to the

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Spanish Siren, for the piper must be paid. As to myself, I vow and protest that I will not take a farthing; the pleasure of having contributed to patch up my old master's broken fortunes is more to me than all the ingots of the Indies. But it is not precisely so with our nymph of Albarazin: she has a little Jewish blood to plead when the Christian precept of loving her neighbor as herself is preached up to her. She would pick her own natural father's pocket; so judge you whether she would be above making a bargain with a travelling uncle.

She has only to name her own terms, answered Don Annibal. Whatever my pension may be, she shall have the third of it annually if she pleases; I will pledge my word for it; and that proportion ought to satisfy her craving, if his Catholic Majesty had settled his whole exchequer on me. I would as soon take your word as your bond, for my own part, replied the nimble-footed messenger of Don Rodrigo; I know that it will stand the assay; but you have to deal with a little creature who knows herself, and naturally supposes that she knows all the rest of the world by the same token. Besides, she would like better to take it in the lump; two thirds to be paid down, in ready money. Why, now how the devil does she mean that I should get the wherewithal? bawled the captain, in a quandary. Does she take me for an auditor of public accounts, or treasurer to a charity? You cannot have made her acquainted with my circumstances. Yes, but I have, replied Pedrillo; she knows very well that you are poorer than Job; after

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what she has heard from me, she could think no otherwise. But do not make yourself uneasy; my brain is never at a loss for an expedient. I know an old scoundrel of a usurer, who will take ten per cent. if he can get no more. You must assign your first year's pension to him, in acknowledgment for a like valuable consideration from him, which you will in point of fact receive, only deducting the above-mentioned interest. As to security, the lender will take your castle at Chinchilla, for want of better; there will be no dispute about that.

The captain declared his readiness to accept the terms, in case of his being so fortunate as to possess any beneficial interest in the good things to be given away the next morning. It happened accordingly. He got a government with a pension of three hundred pistoles. As soon as the news came, he signed and sealed as required, settled his little concerns in town, and went off again for New Castille with a balance of some few pistoles in his favor.

CHAPTER XIII.

GIL BLAS COMES ACROSS HIS DEAR FRIEND FABRICIO AT COURT. GREAT ECSTASY ON BOTH SIDES. THEY ADJOURN TOGETHER, AND COMPARE NOTES; BUT THEIR CONVERSATION IS TOO CURIOUS TO BE ANTICIPATED.

I HAD contracted a habit of going to the royal palace every morning, where I lounged away two or

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three good hours in seeing the good people pass to and fro; but their aspect was less imposing there than in other places, as the lesser stars turn pale in the presence of the sun.

One day, as I was walking back and fore, and strutting about the apartments, making about as wise a figure there as my neighbors, I spied out Fabricio, whom I had left at Valladolid in the service of a hospital director. It surprised me not a little that he was chatting familiarly with the Duke of Medina Sidonia and the Marquis of Santa Cruz. Those two noblemen, if my senses did not deceive me, were listening with admiration to his prattle. To crown the whole, he was as handsomely dressed as a grandee.

Surely I must be mistaken! thought I. Can this possibly be the son of Nunez the barber? More likely it is some young courtier who bears a strong resemblance to him. But my suspense was of no long duration. The party broke up, and I accosted Fabricio. He knew me at once; took me by the hand, and after pressing through the crowd to get out of the precincts, said, with a hearty greeting, My dear Gil Blas, I am delighted to see you again. What are you doing at Madrid? Are you still at service? Some place about the court, perhaps? How do matters stand with you? Let me into the history of all that has happened to you since your precipitate flight from Valladolid. You ask a great many questions in a breath, replied I; and we are not in a fit place for story-telling. You are in

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the right, answered he; we shall be better at home. Come, I will show you the way; it is not far hence. I am quite my own master, with all my comforts about me; perfectly easy as to the main chance, with a light heart and a happy temper; because I am determined to see every thing on the bright side.

I accepted the proposal, and Fabricio escorted me. We stopped at a house of magnificent appearance, where he told me that he lived. There was a court to cross; on one side it had a grand staircase leading to a suit of state apartments, and on the other a small flight, dark and narrow, whither we betook ourselves to a residence elevated in a different sense from what he had boasted. It consisted of a single room, which my contriving friend had divided into four by deal partitions. The first served as an antechamber to the second, where he lay; of the third he made his closet, of the last his kitchen. The chamber and antechamber were papered with maps, and many a sheet of philosophical discussion; nor was the furniture by any means unsuitable to the hangings. There was a large brocade bed much the worse for wear; tawdry old chairs with coarse yellow coverings, fringed with Grenada silk of the same color; a table with gilt feet, and a cloth over it that once aspired to be red, bordered with tinsel and embroidery tarnished by that old corroder, time; with an ebony cabinet, ornamented with figures in a clumsy taste of sculpture. Instead of a convenient desk, he had a small table in his closet; and his library was made up with some few books, and a great many bundles

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of paper arranged on shelves one above the other the whole length of the wall. His kitchen, too modest to put the rest of the establishment out of countenance, exhibited a frugal assortment of earthenware and other necessary implements of cookery.

Fabricio, when he had allowed me leisure to philosophize on his domestic arrangements, begged to know my opinion of his apartments and his housekeeping, and whether I was not enchanted with them. Yes, beyond all manner of doubt, answered I, with a roguish smile. You must have applied your wits to a good purpose at Madrid, to have got so well accoutred. Of course you have some post. Heaven preserve me from any thing of the sort! replied he. My line of life is far above all political situations. A man of rank, to whom this house belongs, has given me a room in it, whence I have contrived to piece out a suit of four, fitted up in such taste as you may see. I devote my time to no employments but what are just to my fancy, and never feel what it is to want. Explain yourself more intelligibly, said I, interrupting him. You set me all agog to be let into your little arrangements. Well then! said he, I will rid you of that devil curiosity at once. I have commenced author, have plunged headlong into the ocean of literature; verse and prose run equally glib; in short, I am a jack of all trades to the muses.

What! you bound in solemn league and covenant to Apollo? exclaimed I, with most intolerable laughter. Nothing under a prophet could ever have anti-

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cipated this. I should have been less surprised at any other transformation. What possible delights have you had the ingenuity to detect in the rugged landscape of Parnassus? It should seem as if the laborers there have a very poor taking in civil life, and feed on a coarse diet without sauce. Out upon you! cried he, in dudgeon at the hint. You are talking of those paltry authors, whose works and even their persons are under the thumb of booksellers and players. Is it any wonder that writers under such circumstances should be held cheap? But the good ones, my friend, are on a better footing in the world; and I think it may be affirmed, vanity apart, that my name is to be found in their list. Questionless, said I, talents like yours are convertible to every purpose; compositions from such a pen are not likely to be insipid. But I am on the rack to know how this rage for fencing with inky weapons could have seized thee.

Your wonder and alarm has mind in it, replied Nunez. I was so well pleased with my situation in the service of Signor Manuel Ordonnez, that I had no hankering after any other. But my genius, like that of Plautus, being too high-minded to contract itself within the sphere of menial occupations, I wrote a play, and got it acted by a company then performing at Valladolid. Though it was not worth the paper it was scrawled upon, it had more success than many better pieces. Hence concluded I that the public was a silly bird, and would hatch any eggs that were put under it. That modest discovery, with

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the consequent madness of incessant composition, alienated my affections from the hospital. The love of poetry being stronger than the desire of accumulation, I determined on repairing to Madrid, as the centre of every thing distinguished, to form my taste in that school. The first thing was to give the governor warning, who parted with me to his own great sorrow, from a sort of affection the result of similar propensities. Fabricio, said he, what possible ground can you have for discontent? None at all, sir, I replied; you are the best of all possible masters, and I am deeply impressed with your kind treatment; but you know one must follow withersoever the stars ordain. I feel the sacred fire within me, on whose aspiring element my name is to be wafted to posterity. What confounded nonsense! rejoined the old fellow, whose ideas were all pecuniary. You are already become a fixture in the hospital, and are made of a metal which may easily be manufactured into a steward, or by good luck even into a governor. You are going to give up the great object of life, and to flutter about its frippery. So much the worse for you, honest friend!

The governor, seeing how fruitless it was to struggle with my fixed resolve, paid me my wages, and made me a present of fifty ducats as an acknowledgment of my services. Thus, between this supply and what I had been able to scrape together out of some little commissions, which were assigned to me from an opinion of my disinterestedness, I was in circumstances to make a very pretty appearance on

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my arrival at Madrid; which I was not negligent in doing, though the literary tribe in our country are not over-punctilious about decency or cleanliness. I soon got acquainted with Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and the whole set of them; but though they were fine fellows, and thought so by the public, I chose for my model, in preference, Don Lewis de Gongora the incomparable, a young bachelor of Cordova, decidedly the first genius that ever Spain produced. He will not suffer his works to be printed during his lifetime, but confines himself to a private communication among his friends. What is very remarkable, nature has gifted him with the uncommon talent of succeeding in every department of poetry. His principal excellence is in satire; there he outshines himself. He does not resemble, like Lucilius, a muddy stream with a slimy bottom; but is rather like the Tagus, rolling its transparent waters over a golden sand.

You give a fine description of this bachelor, said I to Fabricio; and questionless a character of such merit must have attracted an infinite deal of envy. The whole gang of authors, answered he, good and bad equally, are open-mouthed against him. He deals in bombast, says one; aims at double meanings, luxuriates in metaphor, and affects transposition. His verses, says another, have all the obscurity of those which the Salian priests used to chant in their processions, and which nobody was the wiser for hearing. There are others who impute it to him as a fault, to have exercised his genius at

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one time in sonnets or ballads, at another in play-writing, in heroic stanzas, and in minor efforts of wit alternately, as if he had madly taken upon himself to eclipse the best writers each in their own favorite walk. But all these thrusts of jealousy are successfully parried, where the muse, which is their mark, becomes the idol of the great and of the multitude at once.

Under so able a master did I serve my apprenticeship; and, vanity apart, the preceptor was reflected in the disciple. So happily did I catch his spirit, that by this time he would not be ashamed to own some of my detached pieces. After his example, I carry my goods to market at great houses, where the bidding is eager, and the sagacity of the bidders not difficult to match. It is true that I have a very insinuating talent at recitation, which places my compositions in no disadvantageous light. In short, I am the dear delight of the nobility, and live in the most particular intimacy with the Duke of Medina Sidonia, just as Horace used to live with his jolly companion Mæcenas. By such conjuration and mighty magic have I won the name of author. You see the method lies within a narrow compass. Now, Gil Blas, it is your turn to deliver a round unvarnished tale of your exploits.

On this hint I spake; and, unlike most narrators, gave all the important particulars, passing lightly over minute and tiresome circumstances. The action of talking, long continued, puts one in mind of dining. His ebony cabinet, which served for larder,

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pantry, and all possible uses, was ransacked for napkins, bread, a shoulder of mutton far gone in a decline, with its last and best contents, a bottle of excellent wine; so that we sat down to table in high spirits, as friends are wont to do after a long separation. You observe, said he, this free and independent manner of life. I might find a plate laid for me every day, if I chose it, in the very first houses; but, besides that the muse often pays me a visit and detains me within doors, I have a little of Aristippus in my nature. I can pass with equal relish from the great and busy world to my retreat, from all the resources of luxury to the simplicity of my own frugal board.

The wine was so good that we encroached upon a second bottle. As a relish to our fruit and cheese, I begged to be favored with the sight of something, the offspring of his inspired moments. He immediately rummaged among his papers, and read me a sonnet with much energy of tone. Yet, with all the advantage of accent and expression, there was something so uncouth in the arrangement as to baffle all conjecture about the meaning. He saw how it puzzled me. This sonnet then, said he, is not quite level to your comprehension! Is not that the fact? I owned that I should have preferred a construction somewhat less forced. He began laughing at my rusticity. Well then, replied he, we will say that this sonnet would confuse clearer heads than thine; it is all the better for that. Sonnets, odes, in short, all compositions which partake of the sublime, are of

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course the reverse of the simple and natural; they are enveloped in clouds, and their darkness constitutes their grandeur. Let the poet only fancy that he understands himself, no matter whether his readers understand him or not. You are laughing at me, my friend, said I, interrupting him. Let poetry be of what species it may, good sense and intelligible diction are essential to its powers of pleasing. If your peerless Gongora is not a little more lucid than yourself, I protest that his merit will never pass current with me. Such poets may entrap their own age into applause, but will never live beyond it. Now let me have a taste of your prose.

Nunez showed me a preface which he meant to prefix to a dramatic miscellany then in the press. He insisted on having my opinion. I like not your prose one atom better than your verse, said I. Your sonnet is a roaring deluge of emptiness; and as for your preface, it is disfigured by a phraseology stolen from languages yet in embryo, by words not stamped in the mint of general use, by all the perplexity of a style that does not know what to make of itself. In a word, the composition is altogether a thing of your own. Our classical and standard books are written in a very different manner. Poor tasteless wretch! exclaimed Fabricio. You are not aware that every prose writer who aspires to the reputation of sentiment and delicacy in these days, affects this style of his own, these perplexities and innovations which are a stumbling-block to you. There are five or six of us, determined reformers of our language, who have

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undertaken to turn the Spanish idiom topsy-turvy; and with a blessing on our endeavors, we will pull it down and build it up again, in defiance of Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and all the host of wits who cavil at our new modes of speech. Our party is strongly supported in the fashionable world, and we have laid violent hands upon the pulpit.

After all, continued he, our project is commendable; for, to speak without prejudice, we have ten times the merit of those natural writers, who express themselves just like the mob. I cannot conceive why so many sensible men are taken with them. It was all very well at Athens and at Rome, in a wild and undistinguishing democracy; and on that principle only could Socrates tell Alcibiades that the last appeal was to the people in all disputes about language. But at Madrid there is a polite and a vulgar usage, so that our courtiers talk in a different tongue from their tradesmen. You may assure yourself that it is so; in fine, this newly invented style is carrying everything before it, and turning old nature out of doors. Now I will explain to you by a single instance the difference between the elegance of our diction and the flatness of theirs. They would say, for example, in plain terms, "Ballets incidental to the piece are an ornament to a play;" but in our mode of expression, we say more exquisitely, "Ballets incidental to the piece are the very life and soul of the play." Now observe that phrase, *life and soul*. Are you sensible how glowing it is, at the same time how descriptive, setting before you

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all the motions of the dancers, as on an intellectual stage?

I broke in upon my reformer of language with a burst of laughter. Get along with you, Fabricio, said I; you are a coxcomb of your own manufacture, with your affected finery of phrase. And you, answered he, are a blockhead of nature's clumsy moulding, with your starch simplicity. He then went on taunting me with the Archbishop of Grenada's angry banter on my dismission: "Get about your business! Go and tell my treasurer to pay you a hundred ducats, and take my blessing in addition to that sum. God speed you, good master Gil Blas! I heartily pray that you may do well in the world! There is nothing to stand in your way but a little better taste." I roared out in a still louder explosion of laughter at this lucky hit; and Fabricio, easily appeased on the score of impiety, as manifested in the opinion expressed concerning his writings, lost nothing of his pleasant and propitious temper. We got to the bottom of our second bottle, and then rose from the table in fine order for an adventure. Our first intention was to see what was to be seen upon the Prado; but passing in front of a liquor-shop, it came into our heads that we might as well go in.

The company was in general tolerably select at this house of call. There were two distinct apartments, and the pastime in each was of a very opposite nature. One was devoted to games of chance or skill, the other to literary and scientific discus-

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sion; and there were at that moment two clever men by profession handling an argument most pertinaciously, before ten or twelve auditors deeply interested in the discussion. There was no occasion to join the circle, because the metaphysical thunder of their logic made itself heard at a more respectful distance: the heat and passion with which this abstract controversy was managed made the two philosophers look little better than madmen. A certain Eleazar used to cast out devils by tying a ring to the nose of the possessed: had these learned swine been ringed in the same manner, how many little imps would have taken wing out of their nostrils! Angels and ministers of grace defend us, said I to my companion; what contortions of gesture, what extravagance of elocution! One might as well argue with the town crier. How little do we know our natural calling in society! Very true indeed, answered he; you have read of Novius, the Roman pawnbroker, whose lungs went as far beyond the rattle of chariot wheels as his conscience beyond the rate of legal interest; the Novii must certainly have been transplanted into Spain, and these fellows are lineal descendants. But the hopeless part of the case is, that though our organs of sense are deafened, our understandings are not invigorated at their expense. We thought it best to make our escape from these braying metaphysicians, and by that prudent motion to avoid a headache which was just beginning to annoy us. We went and seated ourselves in a corner of the other room, whence, as we sipped our

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refreshing beverage, all comers and goers were obnoxious to our criticism. Nunez was acquainted with almost the whole set. Heaven and earth! exclaimed he, the clash of philosophy is as yet but in its beginning; fresh reënforcements are coming in on both sides. Those three men, just on the threshold, mean to let slip the dogs of war. But do you see those two queer fellows going out? That little swarthy, leather-complexioned Adonis, with long, lank hair parted in the middle with mathematical exactness, is Don Juliano de Villanuno. He is a young barrister, with more of the prig than the lawyer about him. A party of us went to dine with him the other day. The occupation we caught him in was singular enough. He was amusing himself in his office with making a tall greyhound fetch and carry the briefs in the causes which were so unfortunate as to have him retained; and of course the canine *amicus curiæ* set his fangs indifferently into the flesh of plaintiff or defendant, tearing law, equity, precedent, and principle into shreds. That licentiate at his elbow, with jolly, pimple-spangled nose and cheeks, goes by the name of Don Cherubino Tonto. He is a canon of Toledo, and the greatest fool that was ever suffered to walk the earth without a keeper. And yet he arrays his features in that sort of not quite unmeaning smile, that you would give him credit for good sense as well as good humor. His eye has the look of cunning if not of wisdom, and his laugh too much of sarcasm for an absolute idiot. One would conclude that he had a turn for mischief,

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but kept it down from principle and feeling. If you wish to take his opinion upon a work of genius, he will hear it read with so grave and rapt a silence, as nothing but deep thought and acute mental criticism could justify; but the truth is, that he comprehends not one word, and therefore can have nothing to say. He was of the barrister party. There were a thousand good things said, as there always must be in a professional company. Don Cherubino added nothing to the mass of merriment, but looked such perfect approbation at those who did, was so tractable and complimentary a listener, that every man at table placed him second in the comparative estimate of merit.

Do you know, said I to Nunez, who those two fellows are, with dirty clothes and matted hair, their elbows on that table in the corner, and their cheeks upon their hands, whiffing foul breath into each other's nostrils as they lay their heads together? He told me that by their faces they were strangers to him; but that by physical and moral tokens they could only be coffee-house politicians, venting their spleen against the measures of government. But do look at that spruce spark, whistling as he paces up and down the other room, and balancing himself alternately on one toe and on the other. That is Don Augustino Moreto, a young poet sufficiently of nature's mint and coinage to pass current, if flatterers and sciolists had not debased him into a mere coxcomb by their misplaced admiration. The man to whom he is going up with that familiar shake by

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the hand, is one of the set who write verses and then call themselves poets; who claim a speaking acquaintance with the muses, but never were of their private parties.

Authors upon authors, nothing but authors! exclaimed he, pointing out two dashing blades. One would think they had made an appointment on purpose to pass in review before you. Don Bernardo Deslenguado and Don Sebastian of Villa Viciosa! The first is a vinegar-flavored vintage of Parnassus, a satirist by trade and company; he hates all the world, and is not liked the better for his taste. As for Don Sebastian, he is the milk and honey of criticism; he would not have the guilt of ill-nature on his conscience for the universe. He has just brought out a comedy without a single idea, which has succeeded with an audience of tantamount ideas; and he has just now published it to vindicate his innocence.

Gongora's candid pupil was running on in his career of benevolent explanation, when one of the Duke de Medina Sidonia's household came up and said, Signor Don Fabricio, my lord duke wishes to speak with you. You will find him at home. Nunez, who knew that the wishes of a great lord could not be too soon gratified, left me without ceremony; but he left me in the utmost consternation, to hear him called Don, and thus ennobled, in spite of Master Chrysostom the barber's escutcheon, who had the honor to call him father.

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CHAPTER XIV.

FABRICIO FINDS A SITUATION FOR GIL BLAS IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNT GALIANO, A SICILIAN NOBLEMAN.

I was too happy in Fabricio's society not to hunt him out again early the next morning. Good day to you, Signor Don Fabricio, said I on my first approach; it seems you are the picked and chosen flower, or rather, saving your presence, the nondescript excrescence of the Asturian nobility. This sarcasm had no other effect than to set him laughing heartily. Then the title of Don was not lost upon you! exclaimed he. No, indeed, my noble lord, answered I; and you will give me leave to tell you that when you were recounting your transformations to me yesterday, you forgot the most extraordinary. Exactly so, replied he; but to speak sincerely, if I have taken up that prefix of dignity, it is less to tickle my own vanity, than in tenderness to that of others. You know what stuff the Spaniards are made of; an honest man is no honest man to them, if his honor is not bolstered up with escutcheons, pedigree, and patrimony. I may tell you, moreover, that there are so many gentry, and very queer sort of gentry too, dubbed Don Francisco, Don Pedro, Don What-do-you-call-him, or Don Devil, that if they owe their coats of arms to any herald but their own impudence, modern nobility is a mere drug in the market, so that a plebeian of nature's ennobling confers infinite honor on the upstarts of an artificial creation, by herding with their order.

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But let us change the subject, added he. Last night, supping at the Duke de Medina Sidonia's, where, among other company, we had Count Galiano, a great Sicilian nobleman, the conversation turned upon the ridiculous effects of self-love. Delighted at having a case in point by way of illustration, I treated them with the story of the homilies. You may well suppose that there was a hearty laugh, and that the archbishop's dignity was not saved in the concussion; but the effect was not amiss for you, since the company felt for your situation; and Count Galiano, after a long string of questions, which of course I answered to your advantage, commissioned me to introduce you. I was just now going to look after you for that purpose. In all probability he means to offer you a situation as one of his secretaries. I advise you not to hang back. The count is rich, and lives away at Madrid, on the scale of an ambassador. He is said to have come to court on a negotiation with the Duke of Lerma, respecting some crown lands which that minister thinks of alienating in Sicily. In one word, Count Galiano, though a Sicilian, has every feature of generosity, fair dealing, and gentlemanly conduct. You cannot do better than get upon that nobleman's establishment. In all probability the flattering prophecy respecting you at Grenada is to be fulfilled in his person.

It was my full determination, said I to Nunez, to take my swing about town and look at men and manners a little, before the harness was buckled on my back again; but you paint your Sicilian nobleman

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in colors which fascinate my imagination and change my purpose. I should like to close with him at once. You will do so very soon, replied he, or I am much deceived. We sallied forth together immediately, and went to the count's, who resided in the house of his friend, Don Sancho d'Avila, the latter being then in the country.

The court-yard was overrun with pages and footmen in rich and elegant liveries, while the antechamber was blockaded by esquires, gentlemen, and various officers of the household. They were all as fine as possible, but with so whimsical an assortment of features, that you might have taken them for a cluster of monkeys dressed up to satirize the Spanish fashions. Do what you will, there is a certain class of men and women in nature, whom no art can trick out into anything human.

At the very name of Don Fabricio, a lane was formed for my patron, and I followed in the rear. The count was in his dressing-gown, sitting on a sofa and taking his chocolate. We made our obeisance in the most respectful manner; while an inclination of the head on his part, accompanied with a condescending smile, won my heart at once. It is very wonderful, and yet very common, how the most trifling notice from the great penetrates the very soul of those who are not accustomed to it! They must have behaved like fiends before their behavior will be complained of.

After taking his chocolate, he recreated himself with the humors of a large ape, which underwent

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the name of Cupid: why the ape was made a god, or the god likened to an ape, the parties concerned can best answer; the only point of resemblance seemed to be mischief. At all events, this hairy brat of the sylvan Venus had so gambolled himself into his master's good graces, had established such a character for wit and humor, that the life of society was extinguished in his absence. As for Nunez and myself, though we had a better turn for drollery, we were cunning enough to chime in with the prevailing taste. The Sicilian was highly delighted with this, and tore himself away for a moment from his favorite pastime, just to tell me, My friend, you have only to say whether you choose to be one of my secretaries. If the situation suits you, the salary is two hundred pistoles a year. If Don Fabricio gives you a character, that is enough. Yes, my lord, cried Nunez, I am not such a cowardly fellow as Plato, who introduced one of his friends to Dionysius the tyrant, and then was afraid to back his own recommendation. But I have no anxiety about being reproached on that head.

I thanked the poet of the Asturias with a low bow, for having so much better an opinion of me than Plato had of his friend. Then addressing my patron, I assured him of my zeal and fidelity. No sooner did this good nobleman perceive his proposal to be acceptable, than he rang for his steward, and after talking to him apart, said to me, Gil Blas, I will explain the nature of your post hereafter. Meanwhile, you have only to follow that right hand

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man of mine; he has his orders how to bestow you. I immediately retreated, leaving Fabricio behind with the count and Cupid.

The steward, who came from Messina, and proved by all his actions that he came thence, led the way to his own room, overwhelming me all the while with the kindness of his reception. He sent for the tailor who lived upon the skirts of the household, and ordered him to make me out of hand a suit of equal magnificence with those of the principal officers. The tailor took my measure and withdrew. As to lodging, said the native of Messina, I know a room which will just suit you. But stay! Have you breakfasted? I answered in the negative. O, poor shamefaced youth, replied he, why did not you say so? Come this way: I will introduce you where, thank heaven, you have only to ask and have.

So saying, he let me down into the buttery, where we found the clerk of the kitchen, who was a Neapolitan, and of course a complete match for his neighbor on the other side of the water. It might be said of this pair that they were formed to meet by nature. This honest clerk of the kitchen was doing justice to his trade by cramming himself and five or six hangers on with ham, tongue, sausages, and other savory compositions, which, besides their own relish, possess the merit of engendering thirst: we made common cause with these jolly fellows, and helped them to toss off some of my lord the count's best wines. While these things were going on in the buttery, kindred exploits were performing in the

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kitchen. The cook, too, was regaling three or four tradesmen of his acquaintance, who liked good wine as well as ourselves, nor disdained to stuff their craws with meat pasties and game: the very scullions were at free quarters, and filched whatever they pleased. I fancied myself in a house given up to plunder; and yet what I saw was comparatively fair and honest. These little festivities were laughing matters; but the private transactions of the family were very serious.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF GIL BLAS IN DON GALIANO'S HOUSEHOLD.

I WENT away to fetch my movables to my new residence. On my return the count was at table with several noblemen and the poet Nunez, who called about him as if perfectly at home, and took a principal share in the conversation. Indeed, he never opened his lips without applause. So much for wit! With that commodity at market, a man may pay his way in any company.

It was my lot to dine with the gentlemen of the household, who were served nearly as well as their employer. After meal-time I withdrew to ruminate on my lot. So far so good, Gil Blas! said I to myself: here you are in the family of a Sicilian count, of whose character you know nothing. To judge by

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appearances, you will be as much in your element as a duck upon the water. But do not make too sure! You ought to look askew at your horoscope, whose unkindly position you have too often experienced with a vengeance. Independent of that, it is not easy to conjecture what he means you to do. There are secretaries and a steward already: where can your post be? In all likelihood you are intended to manage his little private affairs. Well and good! There is no better luck about the house of a great nobleman, if you would travel post haste to make your fortune. In the performance of more honorable services, a man gets on only step by step, and even at that pace often sticks by the way.

While these philosophical reflections were revolving in my mind, a servant came to tell me that all the company was gone home, and that my lord the count was inquiring for me. I flew immediately to his apartment, where I found him lolling on the sofa, ready to take his afternoon's nap, with his monkey by his side.

Come nearer, Gil Blas, said he; take a chair, and hear me attentively. I placed myself in an attitude of profound listening, when he addressed me as follows: Don Fabricio has informed me that, among other good qualities, you have that of sincere attachment to your masters, and incorruptible integrity. These are my inducements for proposing to take you into my service. I stand in need of a friend in a domestic, to espouse my interests and apply his whole heart and soul to the reform of my establishment.

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My fortune is large, it must be confessed, but my expenditure far exceeds my income every year. And how happens that? Because they rob, ransack, and devour me. I might as well be in a forest infested by banditti, as an inhabitant of my own house. I suspect the clerk of the kitchen and my steward of playing into one another's hands; and unless my thoughts are unjust as well as uncharitable, they are pushing forward as fast as they can to ruin me beyond redemption. You will ask me what I have to do but send them packing, if I think them scoundrels. But then where are others to be got of a better breed? It will be sufficient to place them under the eye of a man who shall be invested with the right of control over their conduct; and you have I chosen to execute this commission. If you discharge it well, be assured that your services will not be repaid with ingratitude. I shall take care to provide you with a very comfortable settlement in Sicily.

With this he dismissed me, and that very evening, in the presence of the whole household, I was proclaimed principal manager and surveyor-general of the family. Our gentlemen of Messina and Naples expressed no particular chagrin at first, because they considered me as a spark of mettle like their own, and took it for granted, that though the loaf was to be shared with a third, there would always be cut and come again for the triumvirate. But they looked inexpressibly foolish the next day, when I declared myself in serious terms a decided enemy to all peculation and underhand dealing. From the clerk of

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the kitchen I required the buttery accounts without varnish or concealment. I went down into the cellar. The furniture of the butler's pantry underwent a strict examination, particularly in the articles of plate and linen. Next I read them a serious lecture on the duty of acting for their employer as they would for themselves; exhorted them to adopt a system of economy in their expenditure; and wound up my harangue with a protestation that his lordship should be acquainted with the very first instance of any unfair tricks that I should discover in the exercise of my office.

But I had not yet got to the length of my tether. There was still wanting a scout to ascertain whether they had any private understanding. I fixed upon a scullion, who, won over by my promises, told me that I could not have applied to a better person to be informed of all that was passing in the family; that the clerk of the kitchen and the steward were one as good as the other, and agreed to burn the candle at both ends; that half the provisions bought for the table were made perquisites by these gentlemen; that the Neapolitan kept a lady who lives opposite St. Thomas's College, and his colleague, not to be outdone, provided for another next door to the Sungate; that these two nymphs had their larder regularly supplied every morning, while the cook, following a good example, sent a few little nice things to a widow of his acquaintance in the neighborhood; but as he winked at the table arrangements of his dear and confidential friends, it was but fair

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that he should draw whenever he pleased upon the wine-cellar; in short, by the practices of these three blood-suckers, a most horrible system of extravagance had found its way into my lord the count's establishment. If you doubt my veracity, added the scullion, only take the trouble of going to-morrow morning about seven o'clock into the neighborhood of St. Thomas's College, and you will see me with a load upon my back, which will convert your suspicions into certainty. Then you, said I, are in the confidence of these honest purveyors? I am factor to the clerk of the kitchen, answered he; and one of my comrades runs on errands for the steward.

I had the curiosity the next day to loiter about St. Thomas's College at the appointed hour. My informer was punctual to time and place. He brought with him a large tray full of butcher's meat, poultry, and game. I took an account of every article, and drew out the bill of fare in my memorandum book, for the purpose of showing it to my master, at the same time telling my little turnspit to execute his commission as usual.

His Sicilian lordship, naturally warm in his temper, would have turned his countryman and the Italian out of doors together, in the first fury of his anger; but after cooling upon it, he got rid of the former only, and gave me his vacant place. Thus my office of supervisor was suppressed very shortly after its creation; nor did I relinquish it with any reluctance. To define it strictly and properly, it was nothing better than that of a spy with a sounding title; there

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was nothing substantial in the nature of the appointment: whereas, to the stewardship was tied the key of the strong box, and with that goes the mystery of the whole family. There are so many little perquisites, and so much patronage attached to that department of administration, that a man must inevitably get rich, almost in spite of his own honesty.

But our Neapolitan was not so easily to be driven from his strongholds. Observing to what a pitch of savage zeal I carried my integrity, and that I was up every morning time enough to enter in my books the exact quantity of meat that came from market, he abandoned the practice of sending it off by wholesale; yet the plunderer did not therefore contract the scale of his demands on the animal creation. He was cunning enough to make it as broad as it was long, by arranging the services with so much the more profusion. Thus, what was sent down again untouched being his property by culinary common law, he had nothing to do but to pamper up his pet with victuals ready dressed, instead of giving her the trouble of cooking for herself. The devil will levy his due out of every transaction, so that the count was very little the better for his paragon of a steward. The unbounded prodigality in our style of setting out a table, even to a surfeiting degree, was a plain hint to me of what was going forward: I therefore took upon myself to retrench the superfluities of every course. This, however, was done with so judicious a hand, that there was nothing like parsimony to be discovered. No one

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would ever have missed what was taken away; and yet the expense was reduced very considerably by a well-regulated economy. That was just what my employer wanted; good housewifery, but a magnificent establishment. There was a love of saving at the bottom, but a taste for grandeur was the ostensible passion.

Abuses seldom exist alone. The wine flowed too freely. If, for instance, there were a dozen gentlemen at his lordship's table, the consumption was seldom less than fifty, sometimes sixty bottles. This was strange, and looked as if there was more in it than met the lips of the guests. Hereupon I consulted my oracle of the scullery, whence I derived most of my wisdom; for he brought me a faithful account of all that was said and done in the kitchen, where they had not the least suspicion of him. It seemed that the havoc of which I complained proceeded from a new confederacy between the clerk of the kitchen, the cook, and the under butler. The latter carried off the bottles half full, and shared their contents with his allies. I spoke to him on the subject, threatening to turn him and all the footmen under him out of doors at a minute's warning, if ever they did the like again. The hint was understood, and the evil remedied. I took especial care lest the slightest of my services should be lost upon my master, who overwhelmed me with commendations, and took a greater liking to me every day. On my part, as a reward to the scullion, he was promoted to the situation next under the cook.

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The Neapolitan was furious at encountering me in every direction. The most aggravating circumstance of the whole was the overhauling of his accounts; for, to pare his nails the closer, I had gone into the market, and informed myself of the prices. I followed him through all his doublings, and always took off the market penny which he wanted to add. He must have cursed me a hundred times a day; but the curses of the wicked fall in blessings on the good. I wonder how he could stay in his place under such discipline; but probably something still stuck by the fingers.

Fabricio, whom I saw occasionally, rather blamed my conduct than otherwise. Heaven grant, said he, one day, that all this virtue may meet with its reward! But between ourselves, you might as well be a little more practicable with the clerk of the kitchen. What! answered I, shall this freebooter put a bold face upon the matter, and charge a fish at ten pistoles in his bill which cost only four? and would you have me pass the articles in my accounts? Why not? replied he, coolly. He has only to let you go snacks in the commission, and the books will be balanced in your favor by the customary rule of stewardship arithmetic. Upon my word, my friend, you are enough to overturn all regular systems of housekeeping; and you are likely to end your days in a livery, if you let the eel slip through your fingers without skinning it. You are to learn that fortune is a very woman, ready and eager to surrender, but expecting the formality of a summons.

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I only laughed at this doctrine, and Nunez laughed at it too, when he found that bad advice was thrown away upon an incorrigibly honest subject. He then wished to make me believe it was all a mere joke. At all events, nothing could shake my resolution to act for my employer as for myself. Indeed, my actions corresponded with my words on that subject; for I may venture to say that in four months my master saved at least three thousand ducats by my thrift.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ACCIDENT HAPPENS TO THE COUNT DE GALIANO'S MONKEY; HIS LORDSHIP'S AFFLICTION ON THAT OCCASION. THE ILLNESS OF GIL BLAS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

At the expiration of the before-mentioned time, the repose of the family was marvellously troubled by an accident, which will appear but a trifle to the reader, and yet it was a very serious matter to the household, especially to me. Cupid, the monkey of whom I was speaking, that animal so much the idol of our lord and master, attempting to leap from one window to another, performed so ill as to fall into the court and put his leg out of joint. No sooner were the fatal tidings carried to the count, than he sung a dirge which pealed through all the neighborhood. In the extremity of his sufferings, every inmate without exception was taken to task, and we

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were all within an inch of being packed off about our business. But the storm only rumbled, without falling; he gave us and our negligence to the devil, without being by any means select in the terms of the bequest. The most notorious of the faculty in the line of fractures and dislocations were sent for. They examined the poor dear leg, set, and bound it up. But though they all gave it as their opinion that there was no danger, my master could not be satisfied without retaining the most eminent about the person of the animal, till he could be pronounced to be in a state of convalescence.

It would be a manifest injustice to the family affections of his Sicilian lordship, not to commemorate all the agonizing sensations of his soul during this period of painful suspense. Would it be thought possible that this tender nurse did not stir from his darling Cupid's bedside all the livelong day? The bandages were never altered or adjusted but in his presence, and he got up two or three times in the night to enquire after his patient. The most provoking part of the business was, that all the servants, and myself in particular, were required to be eternally on the alert, to anticipate the slightest wishes of this ridiculous baboon. In short, there was no peace in the house, till the cursed beast, having recovered from the effects of its fall, got back again to his old tricks and whirligigs. After this, shall we be mealy-mouthed about believing Suetonius, when he tells us that Caligula cared more for his horse than for all the world besides, that he gave him more than the

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establishment and attendance of a senator, and that he even wanted to make him consul? Our wise master stopped little short of the emperor in his partiality to the monkey, and had serious thoughts of purchasing for him the place of corregidor.

Mine was the worst luck of any in the family; for I had so topped my part above all the other servants, by way of paying my court to his lordship, and had nursed poor dear Cupid with such assiduity, as to throw myself into a fit of illness. A violent fever seized me, so that I was almost at death's door. They did what they pleased with me for a whole fortnight, without my consciousness; for the physicians and the fates were both conspiring against me. But my youth was more than a match for the fever and the prescriptions united. When I recovered my senses, the first use I made of them was to observe myself removed to another room. I wanted to know why, and asked an old woman who nursed me; but she told me that I must not talk, as the physician had expressly forbidden it. When we are well, we turn up our noses at the doctors; but when we are sick, we are as much like old women as themselves.

It seemed best therefore to keep silence, though with an inveterate longing to hold converse with my attendant. I was debating the point in my own mind, when there came in two foppish-looking fellows, dressed in the very extreme of fashion. Nothing less than velvet would serve their turn, with linen and lace to correspond. They looked like men of rank; and I could have sworn that they were some

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of my master's friends come to see me out of regard for him. Under that impression I attempted to sit up, and flung away my nightcap to look genteel; but the nurse forced me under the bedclothes again, and tucked me up, announcing these gentlemen, at the same time, as my physician and apothecary.

The doctor came up to my bedside, felt my pulse, looked in my face, and, discovering undeniable symptoms of approaching convalescence, assumed an air of triumph, as if it was all his handiwork, and said there was nothing wanting but to keep the bowels open, and then he flattered himself he might boast of having performed an extraordinary cure. Speaking after this manner, he dictated a prescription to the apothecary, looking in the glass all the time, adjusting the dress of his hair, and twisting his visage into shapes which set me laughing in spite of my debility. At length he took his leave with a slight inclination of the head, and went his way, more taken with the contemplation of his own pretty person, than anxious about the success of his remedies.

After his departure, the apothecary, not to have the trouble of a visit for nothing, made ready to proceed as it is prescribed in certain cases. Whether he was afraid that the old woman's skill was not equal to the exigency, or whether he meant to enhance his own services by assiduity, he chose to operate in person; but in spite of practice and experience, accidents will happen. Haste to return benefits is among the most amiable propensities of our nature; and such was my eagerness not to be

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behindhand with my benefactor, that his velvet dress bore immediate testimony to the profuseness of my gratitude. This he considered merely as one of those little occurrences which checker the fortunes of the pharmaceutical profession. A napkin is a resource for every thing in a sick room, and least said was soonest mended; so he wiped himself quietly, vowing indemnity and vengeance to himself for the necessity under which he unquestionably labored of sending his clothes to the scourer.

On the following morning he returned to the attack more modestly equipped, though there was then no risk of my springing a countermine, as he had only to administer the potion which the doctor had prescribed the evening before. Besides that I felt myself getting better every moment, I had taken such a dislike, since the day before, to the pill-dispensing tribe, as to curse the very universities where these graduated cutthroats kept their exercises in the faculty of slaying. In this temper of mind, I declared, with a round oath, that I would not accept of health through such a medium, but would willingly make over Hippocrates and his myrmidons to the devil. The apothecary, who did not care a doit what became of his compound, if it was but paid for, left the phial on the table, and stalked away in Telamonian silence.

I immediately ordered that bitch of a medicine to be thrown out of window, having set myself so doggedly against it, that I would as soon have swallowed arsenic. Having once drawn the sword, I threw

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away the scabbard; and erecting my tongue into an independent potentate, told my nurse in a determined tone that she must absolutely inform me what was become of my master. The old lady, fearing lest the development of the mystery might completely overset me, or thinking possibly that her prey might escape out of her clutches for want of a little irritating contradiction, was most provokingly mute; but I was so pressing in my demand to be obeyed, that she at length gave me a decisive answer: Worthy sir, you have no longer any master but your own will. Count Galiano is gone back into Sicily.

I could not believe my ears; and yet it was fatally the fact. That nobleman, on the second day of my indisposition, being afraid of harboring death under the same roof with him, had the benevolence to send me packing with my little effects to a ready-furnished room, where providence was left to cure, or a nurse to kill me, as it happened. While the alternative was tottering on the balance, he was ordered back into Sicily, and in the headlong haste of his obedience, never thought about me; whether it was that he numbered me already among the dead, or that great lords, like great wits, have short memories.

My nurse gave me these particulars, and informed me that it was she who had called in a physician and an apothecary, that I might not die without professional honors. I fell into profound musing at this fine story. Farewell my brilliant establishment in Sicily! Farewell my budding hopes and blushing honors! When any great misfortune shall have

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befallen you, says a certain pope, look well to your own conduct, and you will find that there is always something wrong at the bottom of it. With all reverent submission to his holiness, I cannot help thinking myself in this instance an exception to the infallibility of his maxim. How the deuce was I to blame for being visited by a fever? There was more reason for remorse in the monkey or his master than in me.

When I beheld the flattering chimeras with which my head was filled all vanishing into air, into thin air, the first thing that worried my poor brain was my portmanteau, which I ordered to be laid upon my bed to examine it. I groaned heavily on discovering that it had been opened. Alas! my dear portmanteau, exclaimed I, my only hope, consolation, and refuge! You have been, to all appearance, a prisoner in an enemy's country. No, no, Signor Gil Blas, said the old woman; make yourself easy on that head; you have not fallen among thieves. Your baggage is as immaculate as my honor.

I found the dress I had on at my first entrance into the count's service; but it was in vain to look for that which my friend from Messina had ordered for me as a member of the household. My master had not thought fit to leave me in possession of it, or else some one had made free with it. All my other little matters were safe, and even a large leather purse with my coin in it, which I counted over twice, not being able to believe at first that there could be only fifty pistoles remaining out of two hundred and

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sixty, which was the balance of the account before my illness. What is the meaning of all this, my good lady? said I to the nurse. Here is a leak in the vessel. No living soul but myself has touched a farthing, answered the old woman, and I have been as good an economist for you as possible. But illness is very expensive; one must always have one's money in one's hand. Here! added this excellent economist, taking a bundle of papers out of her pocket, this is a statement of debtor and creditor, as exact as a banker's book, and you will see that I have not laid out the veriest trifle in need-nots.

I ran over the account with a hasty glance; for it extended to fifteen or twenty pages. Mercy on us! The poulterers' shops must have been exhausted, while I was in too weak a state to take sustenance! There must have been at least twelve pistoles stewed down into broths. Other articles were much to the same tune. It was incredible what a sum had been lavished in firing, candles, water, brooms, and innumerable articles of house-keeping and house-cleaning. After all, extortionate as the bill was, the utmost ingenuity could not raise it above thirty pistoles, and consequently there was a deficiency of a hundred and eighty to make the account even. I just ventured to point that out; but the old woman, with a show of simplicity and candor, put all the saints in the calendar into requisition to attest that there were no more than eighty pistoles in the purse when the count's steward gave her charge of the wallet. What say you, my good woman? inter-

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rupted I with precipitation: was it the steward who placed my effects in your hands? To be sure it was, answered she; the very man; and with this piece of advice: Here, good mother; when Gil Blas shall be numbered with the dead, do not fail to treat him with a handsome funeral: there is in this wallet wherewithal to defray the expenses.

Ah! most pestiferous Neapolitan! exclaimed I in the bitterness of my heart. I am no longer at a loss to conjecture what is become of the deficiency. You have swept it off as an indemnity for a part of the plunder which I have prevented you from making free with. After relieving my mind by exclamations, I returned thanks to heaven that the scoundrel had been so modest as not to take the whole. Yet whatever reason I had for believing the action to be perfectly in character for the person to whom it was imputed, the nurse had not altogether cleared herself from my suspicions. They hovered sometimes over one and sometimes over the other; but let them light where they would, it was all the same to me. I said nothing about the matter to the old woman; not even so much as to haggle about the items of her fine bill. I should not have been an atom the richer for doing so; and we must all live by our trades. The utmost of my malice was to pay her and send her packing three days afterwards.

I am inclined to think that at her departure she gave the apothecary notice of her quitting the premises, and having left me sufficiently in possession

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of myself to take French leave without acknowledging my obligations to him; for she had not been gone many minutes before he came in puffing and blowing, with his bill in his hand. There, under names which had escaped my conscription, though as arrant a physician as the worst of them, he had set down all the hypothetical remedies which he insisted that I had taken during the time when I could take nothing. This bill might truly be called the epitome of an apothecary's conscience. Such being the case, we had a bustle about the payment. I pleaded for an abatement of one half. He swore that he would not take a doit less than his just demand. He kept his oath, and yet relaxed; for considering that he had to do with a young man who might run away from Madrid within four-and-twenty hours, he preferred my offer of three hundred per cent. on the prime cost of his drugs, though a pitiful profit for an apothecary, to the risk of losing all. I counted out the money with an aching heart, and he withdrew, chuckling over his revenge for the scurvy trick I had played him on the day of evacuation.

The physician made his appearance next; for beasts of prey inhabit the same latitudes. I fee'd him for his visits, which had been quite as frequent as necessary, and his object was answered. But he would not leave me without proving how hardly he had earned his money, for that he had not only expelled the enemy from the interior, but had defended the frontiers from the attack of all the disorders on the

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army list of the *materia medica*. He talked very learnedly, with good emphasis and discretion; so much so, that I did not comprehend one word he said. When I had got rid of him, I flattered myself that the destinies had now done their worst. But I was mistaken; for there came a surgeon whose face I had never seen in the whole course of my life. He accosted me very politely, and congratulated me on the imminent danger I had escaped; attributing the happy issue of my complaints to those which he had himself cut, with the profuse application of bleeding, cupping, blistering, and all sorts of torments, consequent and inconsequent. Another feather out of my poor wing! I was obliged to pay toll to the surgeon also. After so many purgatives, my purse was brought to such a state of debility, that it might be considered as dead and gone; a mere skeleton, drained of all its vital juices.

My spirits began to flag, on the contemplation of my wretched case. In the service of my two last masters I had wedded myself to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and could no longer, as heretofore, look poverty in the face with the sternness of a cynic. It must be owned, however, that I was in the wrong to give way to melancholy, after experiencing so often that fortune had never cast me down, but for the purpose of raising me up again; so that my pitiful plight at the present moment, if rightly considered, was only to be hailed as the harbinger of approaching prosperity.

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BOOK THE EIGHTH.

CHAPTER I.

GIL BLAS SCRAPES AN ACQUAINTANCE OF SOME VALUE, AND FINDS WHEREWITHAL TO MAKE HIM AMENDS FOR THE COUNT DE GALIANO'S INGRATITUDE. DON VALERIO DE LUNA'S STORY.

It seemed so strange to have heard not a syllable from Nunez during this long interval, that I concluded he must be in the country. I went to look after him as soon as I could walk, and found the fact to be, that he had gone into Andalusia three weeks ago, with the Duke of Medina Sidonia.

One morning, when rubbing my eyes after a sound sleep, Melchior de la Ronda started into my recollection; and that bringing to mind my promise, at Grenada, of going to see his nephew, if ever I should return to Madrid, it seemed advisable not to defer fulfilling my promise for a single day. I inquired where Don Balthazar de Zuniga lived, and went thither straightway. On asking if Signor Joseph Navarro was at home, he made his appearance immediately. We exchanged bows with a well-bred coolness on his part, though I had taken care to announce my name audibly. There was no reconciling such a frosty reception with the glowing por-

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trait ascribed to this paragon of the buttery. I was just going to withdraw in the full determination of not coming again, when, assuming all at once an open and smiling aspect, he said, with considerable earnestness, Ah! Signor Gil Blas de Santillane, pray forgive the formality of your welcome. My memory ill seconded the warmth of my disposition towards you. Your name had escaped me, and was not at the moment identified with the gentleman of whom mention was made in a letter from Grenada more than four months ago.

How happy I am to see you! added he, shaking hands with me most cordially. My uncle Melchior, whom I love and honor like my natural father, charges me, if by chance I should have the honor of seeing you, to entertain you as his own son, and in case of need, to stretch my own credit and that of my friends to the utmost in your behalf. He extols the qualities of your heart and mind in terms sufficient of themselves to engage me in your service, though his recommendation had not been added to the other motives. Consider me, therefore, I entreat you, as participating in all my uncle's sentiments. You may depend on my friendship; let me hope for an equal share in yours.

I replied to Joseph's polite assurances in suitable terms of acknowledgment; so that, being both of us warm-hearted and sincere, a close intimacy sprung up without waiting for common forms. I felt no embarrassment about laying open the state of my affairs. This I had no sooner done, than he said,

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I take upon myself the care of finding you a situation; meanwhile, there is a knife and fork for you here every day. You will live rather better than at an ordinary. This offer was sure to be well relished by an invalid just recovering, with a fastidious palate and an empty pocket. It could not but be accepted; and I picked up my crumbs so fast that at the end of a fortnight I began to look like a rosy-gilled son of the church. It struck me that Melchior's nephew larded his lean sides to some purpose. But how could it be otherwise? he had three strings to his bow, as holding the undermentioned pluralities: the butler's place, the clerkship of the kitchen, and the stewardship. Furthermore, without meaning to question my friend's honesty, they do say that the comptroller of the household and he looked over each other's hands.

My recovery was entirely confirmed, when my friend Joseph, on my coming in to dinner as usual one day, said, with an air of congratulation, Signor Gil Blas, I have a very tolerable situation in view for you. You must know that the Duke of Lerma, first minister of the crown in Spain, giving himself up entirely to state affairs, throws the burden of his own on two confidential persons. Don Diego de Monteser takes the charge of collecting his rents, and Don Rodrigo de Calderona superintends the finances of his household. These two officers are paramount in their departments, having nothing to do with one another. Don Diego has generally two deputies to transact the business; and finding just

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now that one of them had been discharged, I have been canvassing for you. Signor Monteser, having the greatest possible regard for me, granted my request at once, on the strength of my testimony to your morals and capacity. We will pay our respects to him after dinner.

We did not miss our appointment. I was received with every mark of favor, and promoted in the room of the dismissed deputy. My business consisted in visiting the farms, in giving orders for the necessary repairs, in dunning the farmers, and keeping them to time in their payments; in a word, the tenants were all under my thumb, and Don Diego checked my accounts every month with a minuteness which few receivers could have borne. But this was exactly what I wanted. Though my uprightness had been so ill requited by my late master, it was my only inheritance, and I was determined not to sell the reversion.

One day news came that the castle of Lerma had taken fire, and was more than half burned down. I immediately went thither to estimate the loss. Informing myself to a nicety, and on the spot, respecting all the particulars of the unlucky accident, I drew up a detailed narrative, which Monteser showed to the Duke of Lerma. That minister, though vexed at the circumstance, was struck with the memorial, and inquired who was the author. Don Diego thought it not enough to answer the question, but spoke of me in such high terms, that his excellency recollected it six months afterwards, on occasion of

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an incident I shall now relate, had it not been for which I might never, perhaps, have been employed at court. It was as follows: —

There lived at that time, in Princes Street, an elderly lady, by name Inesilla de Cantarilla. Her birth was a matter of mystery. Some said she was the daughter of a musical instrument maker, and others gave her a high military extraction. However that might be, she was a very extraordinary personage. Nature had gifted her with the singular talent of winning men's hearts in defiance of time, and in contradiction to her own laws; for she was now entering upon the fourth quarter of her century. She had been the reigning toast of the old court, and levied tribute on the passions of the new. Age, though at daggers drawn with beauty, was completely foiled in its assault upon her charms; they might be somewhat faded, but the touch of sympathy they excited in their decline was more pleasing than the vivid glow of their meridian lustre. An air of dignity, a transporting wit and humor, an unborrowed grace in her deportment perpetuated the reign of passion, and silenced the suggestions of reason.

Don Valerio de Luna, one of the Duke of Lerma's secretaries, a young fellow of five-and-twenty, meeting with Inesilla, fell violently in love with her. He made his sentiments known, enacted all the mummery of despair, and followed up the usual catastrophe of every amorous drama so much according to the unities and rules, that it was difficult, in the

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very torrent and whirlwind of his passion, to beget a temperance that might give it smoothness. The lady, who had her reason for not choosing to fall in with his humor, was at a loss how to get out of the difficulty. One day she was in hopes to have found the means by calling the young man into her closet, and there pointing to a clock upon the table. Mark the precise hour, said she; just seventy-five years ago was I brought upon the stage of this fantastical world. In good earnest would it sit well upon my time of life to be engaged in affairs of gallantry? Betake yourself to reflection, my good child; stifle sentiments so unsuitable to your own circumstances and mine. Sensible as this language was, the spark, no longer bowing to the authority of reason, answered the lady with all the impetuosity of a man racked by the most excruciating torments: Cruel Inesilla, why have you recourse to such frivolous remonstrances? Do you think they can change your charms, or my desires? Delude not yourself with so false a hope. As long as your loveliness or my delusion lasts, I shall never cease to adore you. Well, then, rejoined she, since you are obstinate enough to persist in the resolution of wearying me with your importunities, my doors shall henceforth be shut against you. You are banished, and I beg to be no longer troubled with your company.

It may be supposed, perhaps, that after this, Don Valerio, baffled, made good his retreat, like a prudent general. Quite the reverse! He became more troublesome than ever. Love is to lovers just what

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wine is to drunkards. The swain entreated, sighed, looked, and sighed again, when all at once, changing his note from childish treble to the big, manly voice of bluster and ravishment, he swore that he would have by foul means what he could not obtain by fair. But the lady, repulsing him courageously, said, with a piercing look of strong resentment, Hold, imprudent wretch! I shall put a curb on your mad career. Learn that you are my own son.

Don Valerio was thunderstruck at these words; the tempest of his rage subsided. But, conjecturing that Inesilla had only started this device to rid herself of his solicitations, he answered, That is a mere romance of the moment to steal away from my ardent desires. No, no, said she, interrupting him; I disclose a mystery which should have been forever buried, had you not reduced me to so painful a necessity. It is six-and-twenty years since I was in love with your father, Don Pedro de Luna, then governor of Segovia; you were the fruit of our mutual passion; he owned you, brought you up with care and tenderness, and having no children born in wedlock, he had nothing to hinder him from distinguishing your good qualities by the gifts of fortune. On my part, I have not forsaken you: as soon as you were of an age to be introduced into the world, I drew you into the circle of my acquaintance, to form your manners to that polish of good company, so necessary for a gentleman, which is only to be gained in female society. I have done more: I have employed all my credit to introduce you to the prime

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minister. In short, I have interested myself for you as I should have done for my own son. After this confession, take your measures accordingly. If you can purge your affections from their dross, and look on me as a mother, you are not banished from my presence, and I shall treat you with my accustomed tenderness. But if you are not equal to an effort which nature and reason demand from you, fly instantly, and release me from the horror of beholding you.

Inesilla spoke to this effect. Meanwhile Don Valerio preserved a sullen silence; it might have been interpreted into a virtuous struggle, a conquest over the weakness of his heart. But his purposes were far different; he had another scene to act before his mother. Unable to withstand the total overthrow of all his wild projects, he basely yielded to despair. Drawing his sword, he plunged it in his own bosom. His fate resembled that of Œdipus, with this distinction—that the Theban put out his own eyes from remorse for the crime he had perpetrated, while the Castilian, on the contrary, committed suicide from disappointment at the frustration of his purposes.

The unhappy Don Valerio was not released from his sufferings immediately. He had leisure left for recollection, and for making his peace with heaven, before he rushed into the presence of his Maker. As his death vacated one of the secretaryships on the Duke of Lerma's establishment, that minister, not having forgotten my memoir on the subject of the fire, nor the high character he had heard of me, nominated me to succeed to the post in question.

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CHAPTER II.

GIL BLAS IS INTRODUCED TO THE DUKE OF LÊRMA, WHO ADMITS HIM AMONG THE NUMBER OF HIS SECRETARIES, AND REQUIRES A SPECIMEN OF HIS TALENTS, WITH WHICH HE IS WELL SATISFIED.

MONTESER was the person to inform me of this agreeable circumstance, which he did in the following terms: My friend Gil Blas, though I do not lose you without regret, I am too much your well-wisher not to be delighted at your promotion in the room of Don Valerio. You cannot fail to make a princely fortune, provided you act upon two hints which I have to give you; the first, to affect so total a devotion to his excellency's good pleasure, as to leave no room to conceive it possible that you have any other object or interest in life; the second, to pay your court assiduously to Signor Don Rodrigo de Calderona, for that personage models and remodels, fashions and touches upon the mind of his master, just as if it was clay under the hands of the designer. If you are fortunate enough to chime in with that favorite secretary, you will travel post to wealth and honor, and find relays upon the road.

Sir, said I to Don Diego, returning him thanks at the same time for his good advice, be pleased to give some little opening to Don Rodrigo's character. I have heard a few anecdotes of him. One would suppose him, from some accounts, not to be the best creature in the world; but the people at large

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are inveterate caricaturists when they draw courtiers at full length; though, after all, the likeness will strike, in spite of the aggravation. Tell me therefore, I beseech you, what is your own sincere opinion of Signor Calderona. That is rather an awkward question, answered my principal, with an ironical smile. I should tell any one but yourself, without flinching, that he was a gentleman of the strictest honor, upon whose fair fame the breath of calumny had never dared to blow; but I really cannot put off such a copy of my countenance upon you. Relying as I do on your discretion, it becomes a duty to deal candidly in the delineation of Don Rodrigo; for without that, it would be playing fast and loose with you to recommend the cultivation of his good will.

You are to know, then, that when his excellency was no more than plain Don Francisco de Sandoval, this man had the humility to serve him as his lackey; since which time he has risen by degrees to the post of principal secretary. A prouder excrescence of the dunghill never sprung into vegetation on a summer's day. He considers himself as the Duke of Lerma's colleague; and in point of fact, he may truly be said to parcel out the loaves and fishes of administration, since he gives away offices and governments at the suggestions of his own caprice. The public grumbles and growls upon occasion; but who cares for the grumbling and growling of the public? Let him steal a pair of gloves from the prostitution of political honor, and the bronze upon his forehead will be proof against the peltings of scandal. What I have

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said will decide your dealings toward so supercilious a compound of dust and ashes. Yes, to be sure, said I; leave me alone for that. It will be strange indeed if I cannot wriggle myself into his good graces. If one can but get on the blind side of a man who is to be made a property, it must be want of skill in the player if the game is lost. Exactly so, replied Monteser; and now I will introduce you to the Duke of Lerma.

We went at once to the minister, whom we found in his audience-chamber. His levee was more crowded than the king's. There were commanders and knights of St. James and of Calatrava, making interest for governments and viceroyalties; bishops, who, laboring under oppression of the breath and tightness of the chest in their own dioceses, had been recommended the air of an archbishopric by their physicians, while the sounder lungs of lower dignitaries were strong enough to inhale the Theban atmosphere of a suffragan see. I observed, besides, some reduced officers dancing attendance to Captain Chinchilla's tune, and catching cold in fishing for a pension, which was never likely to pay the doctor for their cure. If the duke did not satisfy their wants, he put a pleasant face upon their importunities; and it struck me that he returned a civil answer to all applicants.

We waited patiently till the routine of ceremony was despatched. Then said Don Diego, My lord, this is Gil Blas de Santillane, the young man appointed by your excellency to succeed Don Valerio.

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The duke now took more particular notice of me, saying obligingly, that I had already earned my promotion by my services. He then took me to a private conference in his closet, or rather to an examination. My birth, parentage, and course of life were the objects of his inquiry; nor would he be satisfied without the particulars, and those in the spirit of sincerity. What a career to run over before a patron! Yet it was impossible to lie in the presence of a prime minister. On the other hand, my vanity was concerned in suppressing so many circumstances, that there was no venturing on an unqualified confession. What cunning scene had Roscius then to act? A little painting and tattooing might decently be employed, to disguise the nakedness of truth, and spare her unsophisticated blushes. But he had studied her complexion, as well as the beauties of her natural form. Monsieur de Santillane, said he with a smile on the close of my narrative, I perceive that hitherto you have had your principles to choose. My lord, answered I, coloring up to the eyes, your excellency enjoined me to deal sincerely, and I have complied with your orders. I take your doing so in good part, replied he. It is all very well, my good fellow: you have escaped from the snares of this wicked world more by luck than management: it is wonderful that bad example should not have corrupted you irreparably. There are many men of strict virtue and exemplary piety, who would have turned out the greatest rogues in existence, if their destinies had exposed them to but half your trials.

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Friend Santillane, continued the minister, ponder no longer on the past; consider yourself, as to the very bone and marrow, the king's; live henceforth but for his service. Come this way; I will instruct you in the nature of your business. He carried me into a little closet adjoining his own, which contained a score of thick folio registers. This is your workshop, said he. All these registers compose an alphabetical peerage, giving the heraldry and history of all the nobility and gentry in the several kingdoms and principalities of the Spanish monarchy. In these volumes are recorded the services rendered to the state by the present possessors and their ancestors, descending even to the personal animosities and rencounters of the individuals and their houses. Their fortunes, their manners, in a word, all the pros and cons of their character, are set down according to the letter of ministerial scrutiny, so that they no sooner enter on the list of court candidates, than my eye catches up the very chapter and verse of their pretensions. To furnish this necessary information, I have pensioned scouts everywhere on the lookout, who send me private notices of their discoveries; but as these documents are for the most part drawn up in a gossiping and provincial style, they require to be translated into gentlemanly language, or the king would not be able to support the perusal of the registers. This task demands the pen of a polite and perspicuous writer; I doubt not but you will justify your claim to the appointment.

After this introduction, he put a memorial into

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my hand, taken from a large portfolio full of papers, and then withdrew from my closet, that my first specimen might be manufactured in all the freedom of solitude. I read the memorial, which was not only stuffed with a most uncouth jargon, but breathed a brimstone spirit of rancor and personal revenge. This was most foul, strange, and unnatural! for the homily was written by a monk. He hacked and hewed a Catalan family of some note most unmercifully; with what reason or truth, it must be reserved for a more penetrating inquirer to decide. It read, for all the world, like an infamous libel, and I had some scruples about becoming the publisher of the calumny; nevertheless, young as I was at court, I plunged head foremost, at the risk of sinking and destroying his reverence's soul. The wickedness, if there was any, would be put down to his running account with the recording angel; I therefore had nothing to do but to vilify, in the present Spanish phraseology, some two or three generations of honest men and loyal subjects.

I had already blackened four or five pages, when the duke, impatient to know how I got on, came back and said, Santillane, show me what you have done; I am curious to see it. At the same time, casting his eye over the transcript, he read the beginning with much attention. It seemed to please him; strange that he could be so pleased! Prepossessed as I have been in your favor, observed he, I must own that you have surpassed my expectations. It is not merely the elegance and distinctness of the

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handwriting! There is something animated and glowing in the composition. You will do ample credit to my choice, and fully make up for the loss of your predecessor. He would not have cut my panegyric so short, if his nephew the Count de Lemos had not interrupted him in the middle of it. By the warmth and frequency of his excellency's welcome, it was evident that they were the best friends in the world. They were immediately closeted together on some family business, of which I shall speak in the sequel. The king's affairs at this time were obliged to play second to those of the minister.

While they were caballing it struck twelve. As I knew that the secretaries and their clerks quitted office at that hour to go and dine wherever their business and desire should point them, I left my prize performance behind me, and went to the gayest tavern at the court end of the town, for I had nothing further to do with Monteser, who had paid my salary, and taken his leave of me. But a common eating-house would have been a very improper place for me to be seen in. "Consider yourself, as to the very bone and marrow, the king's." This metaphorical expression of the duke had given birth to a real and tangible ambition in my soul, which put forth shoots like a plantation in a fat and unvexed soil.

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CHAPTER III.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS. SOME UNEASINESS RESULTING FROM THE DISCOVERY OF THAT PRINCIPLE IN PHILOSOPHY, AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES.

I TOOK especial care, on my first entrance, to instil into the tavern-keeper's conception that I was secretary to the prime minister; nor was it easy, in that view of my rank and consequence, to order anything sufficiently sumptuous for dinner. To have selected from the bill of fare might have looked as if I descended to the meanness of calculation; I therefore told him to send up the best the house afforded. My orders were punctually obeyed; and the anxious assiduity of the attendants pampered my fancy as much as the dishes did my palate. As to the bill, I had nothing to do with it but to pay it. Down went a pistole upon the table, and the waiters pocketed the difference, which was somewhat more than a quarter. After this display of grandeur I strutted out, practising those obstreperous clearings of the throat, which announce, by empty sound, the approach of a substantial coxcomb.

There was at the distance of twenty yards a large house with lodgings to let, principally frequented by foreign nobility. I rented at once a suit of apartments, consisting of five or six rooms elegantly furnished. From my style of living, any one would have thought I had two or three thousand ducats of

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yearly income. The first month was paid in advance. Afterwards I returned to business, and employed the whole afternoon in going on with what I had begun in the morning. In a closet adjoining mine there were two other secretaries; but their office was only to copy out fair. I got acquainted with them as we were shutting up for the evening, and, by way of smoothing the first overtures towards friendship, invited them home with me to my tavern, where I ordered the choicest delicacies of the season, with a profusion of the most exquisite wines.

We sat down to table, and began bandying about more merriment than wit; for with all due deference to my guests, it was but too visible that they owed their official situations to any circumstance rather than to their abilities. They were adepts, it must be confessed, in all the history and mystery of scrivening and clerkship; but as for polite literature and university education, there was not even a suspicion of it in all their talk.

To make amends for that defect, they had a keen eye to the main chance; and though sensible how high an honor it was to be on the prime minister's establishment, there were some dashes of acid in the cup of good fortune. It is now full five months, said one of them, that we have been serving at our own cost. We do not touch one farthing of salary; and, what is worst of all, our very board wages are shamefully in arrear. There is no knowing what footing we are upon. As for me, said the other, I would willingly be tied up to the halbert, and receive

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a percentage in lashes, for the liberty of changing my berth; but I dare not either take myself off or petition for my discharge, after having transcribed such state secrets as have passed under my inspection. I might chance to become too well acquainted with the tower of Segovia or the castle of Alicant.

How do you manage for a subsistence, then? said I. You must of course have means of your own. These they represented as very slender; but that, fortunately for them, they lodged with a kind-hearted widow, who boarded them on tick, at the rate of a hundred pistoles a year for each. These anecdotes of a court life, not one of which escaped me, completely ventilated all the rising fumes of pride. It could not be supposed that more consideration would be shown to me than to others, and consequently there was nothing to be so puffed up with in my post; there seemed to be much cry and little wool—a discovery which rendered it expedient to husband my finances with a narrower economy. A picture like this was enough to cure my taste for treating. I repented not having left these secretaries to find their own supper; for they played a most cruel knife and fork at mine! and, when the bill was brought, I squabbled with the landlord about the charges.

We parted at midnight; and the early breaking up was to be laid at my door; for I did not propose another bottle. They went home to their widow, and I withdrew to my magnificent lodgings, which I was now mad with myself for having taken, and was fully determined to give up at the month's end. My

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bed of down was now converted into a couch of thorns; sleep had abandoned his narcotic tenement, and sold the fee-simple of my repose to the demon of eternal wakefulness. The remainder of the night was passed in contriving not to serve the state too patriotically. For that purpose I bethought me of Monteser's good counsel. I got up with the intention of making my bow to Don Rodrigo de Calderona. My present temper was just pat to the purpose of ingratiating myself with so high and mighty a gentleman, whose patronage was indispensable to my existence. I therefore presented my person in that secretary's antechamber.

His apartments communicated with the duke's, and rivalled them in the lustre of their decorations. The field officer could scarcely be distinguished from the subaltern by any outward distinction in his paraphernalia. I sent in my name as Don Valerio's successor; but that did not hinder me from being kept kicking my heels for a good hour. Trusty but novice officer of the king, said I, while ruminating on court manners, learn a lesson of patience, if so please you. You must begin with showing paces yourself, and afterwards make others bite the bridle.

At length the door of the inner room opened. I went in, and advanced towards Don Rodrigo, who had just been writing an amorous epistle to his charming Siren, and was giving it to Pedrillo at that very moment. I had never manufactured my face and air into such a counterfeit of reverence before the Archbishop of Grenada, nor on my intro-

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duction to the Count de Galiano, nor even in presence of the prime minister himself: the crisis of my fawning was reserved for Signor de Calderona. I paid my respects to him with my body bent down to the very ground, as if crouching under the ken of a superior intelligence, and solicited his protection in strains of humble hypocrisy, at which my cheek now burns with shame, to think that man can so debase himself before his fellow-man. My servility would have recoiled to my own undoing, had it been practised towards a compound of any manly and independent ingredients. As for this fellow, he swallowed flattery by the lump without mastication, and assured me, just as if he meant what he said, that he would leave no stone unturned to do me service.

Hereupon, thanking him with unlimited expressions of attachment for his kind and generous sentiments, I sold my very soul, and all my little stock of conscience, to his free disposal. But as this farce might be tiresome if prolonged, I took my leave, apologizing for having broken in upon his more serious avocations. As soon as I had finished this abominable scene, I slunk back to my desk, where I finished my prescribed task. The duke was at my elbow the next morning. The end of my performance was not less to his mind than the beginning; and he praised it accordingly: This is extremely well indeed! Copy this abridgment in your best hand into the register of Catalonia. You shall not want employment of this kind. I had a very long conversation with his excellency, and was delighted at his

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mild and familiar deportment. What a contrast to Calderona! They might have sat to a painter for Pan and Apollo.

To-day I dined at a cheap ordinary, and sunk the secretary upon my messmates, till I should ascertain what solid profit might accrue from all my bows and scrapes. I had funds for three months, or thereabouts. That interval I allowed myself for casting my bread upon the waters. But as the shortest speculations are the safest, if my salary was not paid by that time, a long farewell to the court, its frippery, and its falsehood! Thus were my plans arranged. For two months I labored hard and fast to stand well with Calderona; but his senses were so callous to all my assiduity, that it seemed labor in vain to build on so hopeless a foundation. This idea produced a change in my conduct. I left some greener fool to fumigate the nostrils of this idol, and placed all my own dependence on making my ground sure with the duke, by the benefit of our frequent conferences.

CHAPTER IV.

GIL BLAS BECOMES A FAVORITE WITH THE DUKE OF LERMA, AND THE CONFIDANT OF AN IMPORTANT SECRET.

THOUGH his grace's interviews with me were short as the fleeting visions of supernatural communication, my turn and character won its way gradually

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into his excellency's good liking. One day after dinner, he said, Attend to me, Gil Blas. I really like you very much. You are a zealous, confidential lad, full of understanding and discretion. My trust cannot be misplaced in such hands. I threw myself at his feet at the music of these words, and kissing his outstretched hand, answered thus: Is it possible that your excellency can think so favorably of your servant? What a host of enemies will such a preference conjure up against me! But Don Rodrigo is the only man whose privy grudge is formidable enough to alarm me.

You have nothing to fear from that quarter, replied the duke. I know Calderona. He has loved me from his cradle. Every movement of his heart is in unison with mine. He cherishes whatever I love, and hates in exact proportion to my dislike. So far from being alarmed at his ill will, you ought, on the contrary, to hug yourself on his peculiar partiality. This let me at once into the abysses of Don Rodrigo's character. He shuffled and cut the cards to his own deal, and paid his debts of honor out of his excellency's pool. One could not be too wary with this gentleman.

To begin, pursued the duke, with a proof of my thorough reliance on your faith, I will open to you a long-projected design. It is necessary for you to be informed of it, to qualify you for the commissions with which I shall hereafter have occasion to intrust you. For a great length of time have I beheld my authority universally respected, my decisions

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implicitly adopted, places, pensions, governments, viceroyalties, and church preferments, all awaiting my disposal. Without umbrage to my royal master, I may be said to be absolute in Spain. My individual fortunes can be pushed no higher. But I would willingly fix firm the structure I have raised, for the storms are already beginning to beat about the citadel of my peace. My only safety must consist in nominating my nephew, the Count de Lemos, as my successor in the ministry.

This profound courtier, observing my astonishment, went on thus: I see plainly, Santillane, I see plainly what surprises you. It seems strange and unaccountable that I should prefer my nephew to my own son, the Duke d'Uzeda. But you are to learn that this last has too narrow a genius to fill up my place in politics; and there are other reasons why I set my face against him. He has found out the secret of making himself agreeable to the king, who wants him for his interior cabinet; and back stairs influence is what I cannot bear. Royal favor is a sort of political mistress; exclusive possession is its only charm. The very existence of the passion is identified with inextinguishable jealousy; nor can we the better endure to share the bliss, because our rival has been nursed in our own bosom.

Thus do I lay bare the very recesses of my soul. I have already tried to ruin the Duke d'Uzeda with the king; but having failed, am pointing my artillery towards another object. I am determined that the Count de Lemos shall stand first with the Prince of

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Spain. Being gentleman of his bed-chamber, he has opportunities of talking with him continually; and, besides that he has a winning manner with him, I know a sure method of enabling him to succeed in his enterprise. By this device, my nephew will be pitted against my son. The cousins, harboring unfavorable suspicions of each other, will both be forced to place themselves under my protection; and the necessity of the case will render them submissive to my will. This is my project; nor will your assistance be of slender avail to its success. It is you whom I shall make the private channel of communication between the Count de Lemos and myself.

After this confidence, which sounded, for all the world, like the clink of current coin, my mind was easy about the future. At length, said I, behold me taking shelter under Plutus's gutter; the golden shower may drench me to the skin before I shall cry, Hold, enough! It is impossible that the bosom friend of a man, by whom the whole music of the political machine is tempered, should be left to thrum upon the discord of poverty. Full of these harmonious visions, my fifths and octaves were but little untuned by the sensible declension of my purse.

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CHAPTER V.

THE JOYS, THE HONORS, AND THE MISERIES OF A COURT LIFE, IN THE PERSON OF GIL BLAS.

THE minister's growing partiality towards me was soon noticed. He displayed it ostentatiously, by committing his portfolio to my custody, which it was his habit to carry in his own hand when he went to council. This novelty causing me to be looked upon as a rising favorite, excited the envy of certain persons, so that I was preciously sprinkled with the hellish dew of court malevolence. My two neighbors the secretaries were not the last to compliment me on my budding honors, and invited me to supper at the widow's, not so much by way of returning my hospitality, as with an eye to business in the cultivation of my acquaintance. Parties were made for me everywhere. Even the haughty Don Rodrigo was cap-in-hand to me. He now called me nothing less than Signor de Santillane, though the moon had scarcely changed her face since he *thee'd* and *thou'd* me, without ever bethinking him that he was talking to something above a pauper. He heaped me up and pressed me down with civilities, especially within eyeshot of our common patron. But the fool was wiser than to be caught with chaff. The good breeding of my returns was nicely proportioned to my thorough detestation of my humble servant: a rascal who had lived in court all his life could not have played the rascal better than I did.

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I likewise accompanied my lord duke when he had an audience of the king, which was usually three times a day. In the morning he went into his majesty's chamber as soon as he was awake. There he dropped down on his marrow-bones by the bedside, talked over what was to be done in the course of the day, and put into the royal mouth the speeches the royal tongue was to make. He then withdrew. After dinner he came back again; not for state affairs, but for *what, what?* and a little gossip. He was well instructed in all the tittle-tattle of Madrid, which was sold to him at the earliest of the season. Lastly, in the evening he saw the king again for the third time, put whatever color he pleased on the transactions of the day, and, as a matter of course, requested his instructions for the morrow. While he was with the king, I kept in the antechamber, where people of the first quality, sinking that they might rise, threw themselves in the way of my observation, and thought the day not lost if I had deigned to exchange a few words of common civility with them. Was it to be wondered at if my self-importance fattened upon such food? There are many folks at court who stalk about on stilts of much frailer materials.

One day my vanity was still more highly pampered. The king, to whom the duke had puffed off my style, was curious to see a sample of it. His excellency made me bring the register of Catalonia and myself into the royal presence, telling me to read the first memorial I had digested. If so catholic a critic

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overpowered my modesty at first, the minister's encouragement recalled my scattered spirits, and I read with good tone and emphasis what his majesty deigned to hear with some symptoms of approbation. He spoke handsomely of my performance, and recommended my fortunes to the especial care of his minister. My humility was not the greater for the augmentation of my consequence; and a particular conversation some days afterwards with the Count de Lemos swelled high the spring tide of all my ambitious anticipations.

I waited on that nobleman from his uncle at the Prince of Spain's court, and presented credentials from the duke, directing him to deal unreservedly with me, as with a man who was embarked in their design, and selected by himself exclusively as their go-between. The count then took me to a room, where he locked the door, and then spoke as follows: Since you are confidential with the Duke of Lerma, I doubt not you deserve to be so, and shall unbosom myself to you without hesitation. You are to know that matters go on just as we could wish. The Prince of Spain distinguishes me above the most assiduous of his courtiers. I had a private conversation with him this morning, wherein he expressed some disgust at being restrained by the king's avarice from following the inclinations of his liberal heart, and living on a scale befitting his august rank. On this head I chimed in with his regrets, and, taking advantage of the opportunity, promised to carry him a thousand pistoles early to-morrow morning, as an

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earnest of larger sums with which I have engaged to feed his necessities forthwith. He was in ecstasy at my promises; and I am certain of securing his grace and favor in tail, if I can but fulfil my engagement. Acquaint my uncle with these particulars, and come back in the evening with his sentiments on the subject.

I left the Count de Lemos with the last words still quivering on his lips, and went back to the Duke of Lerma, who, on my report, sent to ask Calderona for a thousand pistoles, which he charged me to carry to the count in the evening. Away went I on my errand, muttering to myself, So, so, now I have discovered the minister's infallible receipt for the cure of all evils. Faith and troth, he is in the right; and to all appearance he may draw as copiously as he pleases from the spring, without exhausting the source. I can easily guess what bag these pistoles come from; but, after all, is it not the order of nature that the parent should nurture and maintain the child? The Count de Lemos, at our parting, said to me in a low voice, Farewell, my good and worthy friend. The Prince of Spain has a little hankering after the women; we must have a little conversation on that subject one of these days; I foresee that your agency will be very applicable on that head. I returned with my head full of this last hint, which it was impossible to misinterpret. Neither did I wish to do so, for it suited my talents to a nicety. What the devil is to happen next? said I. Behold me on the point of becoming pimp to

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the heir of the monarchy. Whether pimping was a virtue or a vice, I did not stop to inquire; the coarse surtout of morality would have worn but shabbily while the passions of so exalted a gallant were in the glare and glow of all their newest gloss. What a promotion for me, to be the provider of pleasure to a great prince! Fair and softly, Master Gil Blas, some one may say; after all, you will be but second minister. May be so; but at bottom the honor of both these posts is equal; the difference lies in the profit only.

While executing these honorable commissions, and getting forward daily in the good graces of the prime minister, what a happy being should I have been, if statesmen were born with a set of intestines to turn the chameleon's diet into chyle! It was more than two months since I had got rid of my grand lodging, and had taken up my quarters in a little room scarcely good enough for a banker's clerk. Though this was not quite as it should be, yet since I went out betimes in the morning, and never returned at night before bed-time, there was not much to quarrel about on that score. All day I was the hero of my own stage, or rather of the duke's. It was a principal part that I was playing. But when I retired from this brilliant theatre to my own cock-loft, the great lord vanished, and poor Gil Blas was left behind, without a royal image in his pocket, and, what was worse, without the means of conjuring up his glorious resemblance. Besides that it would have wounded my pride to have divulged my

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necessities, there was not a creature of my acquaintance who could have assisted me but Navarro; and him I had too palpably neglected, since my introduction at court, to venture on soliciting his benevolence. I had been obliged to sell my wardrobe article by article. There was nothing more left than was absolutely necessary to make a decent appearance. I no longer went to the ordinary, because I had no longer wherewithal to pay my score. How, then, did I make shift to keep body and soul together? There was every morning, in our offices, a scanty breakfast set out, consisting of a little bread and wine; this was the whole of our commons on the minister's establishment. I never knew what it was to exceed this stint during the day, and at night I most frequently went supperless to bed.

Such was the fare of a man who made a splendid figure at court; but his illustrious fortunes, like those of other courtiers, were more a subject of pity than of grudge. I could no longer resist the pressure of my circumstances, and ultimately resolved on their disclosure at a seasonable opportunity. By good luck such an occasion offered at the Escurial, whither the king and the Prince of Spain removed some days afterwards.

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CHAPTER VI.

GIL BLAS GIVES THE DUKE OF LERMA A HINT OF HIS WRETCHED CONDITION. THAT MINISTER DEALS WITH HIM ACCORDINGLY.

WHEN the king kept his court at the Escurial, all the world was at free quarters: under such easy circumstances I did not feel where the saddle galled. My bed was in a wardrobe near the duke's chamber. One morning that minister, having got up, according to his cursed custom, at daybreak, made me take my writing apparatus, and follow him into the palace gardens. We went and sat down under an avenue of trees; myself, as he would have it, in the posture of a man writing on the crown of his hat; his attitude was with a paper in his hand, and any one would have supposed he had been reading. At some distance, we must have looked as if the scale of Europe was to turn upon our decision; but between ourselves, who partook of it, the talk was miserably trifling.

For more than an hour had I been tickling his excellency's fancy with all the conceits engendered by a merry nature and an eccentric course of life, when two magpies perched on the trees above us. Their clack and clatter was so obstreperous as to force our attention, whether we would or no. These birds, said the duke, seem to be in dudgeon with one another. I should like to learn the cause of their quarrel. My lord, said I, your curiosity re-

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minds me of an Indian story in Pilpay, or some other fabulist. The minister insisted on the particulars, and I related them in the following terms: —

There reigned in Persia a good monarch, who, not being blessed with capacities of sufficient compass to govern his dominions in his own person, left the care of them to his grand vizier. That minister, whose name was Atalmuc, was possessed of first-rate talents. He supported the weight of that unwieldy monarchy, without sinking under the burden. He preserved it in profound peace. His art consisted in uniting the love of the royal authority with the reverence of it; while the people at large looked up to the vizier as to an affectionate father, though a devoted servant of his prince. Atalmuc had a young Cachemirian among his secretaries, by name Zeangir, to whom he was particularly attached. He took pleasure in his conversation, invited him frequently to the chase, and opened to him his most secret thoughts. One day, as they were hunting together in a wood, the vizier, at the croaking of two ravens on a tree, said to his secretary, I should like to know what those birds are talking about in their jargon. My lord, answered the Cachemirian, your wishes may be fulfilled. Indeed! How so? replied Atalmuc. Because, rejoined Zeangir, a dervis, read in many mysteries, has taught me the language of birds. If you wish it, I will lay my ear close to these, and will repeat to you, word for word, whatever they may happen to say.

The vizier agreed to the proposal. The Cache-

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mirian got near the ravens, and affected to suck in their discourse. Then, returning to his master, My lord, said he, would you believe it? We are ourselves the topic of their talk. Impossible! exclaimed the Persian minister. Prithee now, what do they say of us? One of the two, replied the secretary, spoke thus: Here he is, the very man; the grand vizier, Atalmuc, the guardian eagle of Persia, hovering over her like the parent bird over its nest, watching without intermission for the safety of its brood. For the purpose of unbending from his wearisome toils, he is hunting in this wood with his faithful Zeangir. How happy must that secretary be, to serve so partial and indulgent a master! Fair and softly, observed the other raven shrewdly, fair and softly! Make not too much parade about that Cachemirian's happiness. Atalmuc, it is true, talks and jokes familiarly with him, honors him with his confidence, and may very possibly intend to signalize his friendship by a lucrative post; but between the cup and the lip Zeangir may perish with thirst. The poor devil lodges in a ready-furnished apartment, where there is not an article of furniture for his use. In a word, he leads a starving life, with all the paraphernalia of a plump-fed courtier. The grand vizier never troubles his head about inquiring into the right or wrong of his affairs, but, satisfied with empty good wishes towards him, leaves his favorite within the ruthless gripe of poverty.

I stopped here to see how the Duke of Lerma would take it! and he asked me, with a smile, what

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effect the fable had produced on the mind of Atalmuc, and whether the grand vizier had not felt a little offended at his secretary's presumption. No, my noble lord, answered I, with some little embarrassement at the question; historians say that his ingenuity was amply rewarded. He was more lucky than discreet, replied the duke, with a serious air; there are some ministers who would esteem it no joke to be lectured at that rate. But the king will not be long before he is getting up; my duty demands my attendance. After this hint he walked off with hasty strides towards the palace, without throwing away a word more upon me, and to all appearance in high dudgeon at my Indian parable.

I followed him up to the very door of his majesty's chamber, and went thence to arrange my papers in the places whence they had been taken. Then I entered a closet where our two copying secretaries were at work; for they also were of the migratory party. What is the matter with you, Signor de Santillane? said they at the sight of me. You are quite down in the mouth! Has anything untoward happened?

I was too much mortified at the ill success of my narrative to be cautious in the expression of my grief. On the recital of what had passed with the duke, they sympathized in my disappointment. You have some reason to fret, said one of them. Heaven grant you may be better treated than a secretary of Cardinal Spinosa. This unlucky secretary, tired of working for fifteen months without pay, took the

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liberty of representing his necessities to his eminence one afternoon, and of asking for a little money towards his subsistence. It is very proper, said the minister, that you should be paid. Here, pursued he, putting into his hands an order on the royal treasury for a thousand ducats; go and receive that sum; but take notice at the same time that it balances accounts between us. The secretary would have pocketed his thousand ducats without remorse, had the thousand ducats been tangible, and the liberty of changing services secure; but just as he stepped down from the cardinal's threshold, he was tapped on the shoulder by an alguazil, and carried away to the tower of Segovia, where he has been a prisoner for a length of time.

This little historical anecdote set my teeth chattering. All was lost and gone! There was no comfort from within nor from without! My own impatience had been my ruin! just as if I had not borne starving till patience could avail no longer. Alas! said I, wherefore must I have blurted out that ill-starred fable, which went so much against the grain of the minister? He might have been just on the point of extricating me from all my miseries; it might have been the moment of that tide in the affairs of men which sets in for sudden and enormous elevation. What wealth, what honors have slipped through the fingers by my blunder! I ought to have been aware that great folks do not love to be forestalled, but require the common privileges of elementary subsistence to be received as favors at

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their hands. It would have been more prudent to have kept my lenten entertainment longer without bothering the duke about it, and even to have died with hunger, that he might be blamed for letting me.

Supposing any hope to have remained, my master, when I saw him after dinner, put an extinguisher over it at once. He was very serious with me, contrary to his usual custom, and spoke scarcely at all — an omen of dire dismay for the remainder of the evening. The night did not pass more tranquilly: the chagrin of seeing my agreeable illusions vanish, and the fear of swelling the calendar of state prisoners, left no room but for sighs and lamentations.

The following was the critical day. The duke sent for me in the morning. I went into his chamber, with the ague fit of a criminal before his judge. Santillane, said he, showing me a paper in his hand, take this order . . . I shuddered at the word order, and said within myself, O heaven! here is the Cardinal Spinosa over again; the carriage is ordered out for Segovia. Such was my alarm at this moment, that I interrupted the minister, and throwing myself at his feet, May it please your lordship, said I, bathed in tears, I most humbly beseech your excellency to forgive me for my boldness; necessity alone impelled me to acquaint you with my wretched circumstances.

The duke could not help laughing at my distress. Be comforted, Gil Blas, answered he, and hearken attentively. Though by betraying your necessities a reproach lights upon me for not having prevented

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them, I do not take it ill, my friend. I rather ought to be angry with myself for not having inquired how you were going on. But to begin making amends for my want of attention, there is an order on the royal treasury for fifteen hundred ducats, payable at sight. This is not all; I promise you the same sum annually; and moreover, when people of rank and substance shall solicit your interest, I have no objection to your addressing me on their behalf.

In the excess of joy occasioned by such tidings, I kissed the feet of the minister, who, having commanded me to rise, continued in familiar conversation. I endeavored to rally my free and easy humor; but the transition from sorrow to rapture was too instantaneous to be natural. I felt as comical as a culprit, with a pardon singing in his ears, just when he was on the point of being launched into eternity. My master attributed all my flurry to the sole dread of having offended him; though the fear of perpetual imprisonment had its share of influence on my nerves. He owned that he had affected to look cool, to see whether I should be hurt at the alteration; that thereby he formed his opinion with respect to the liveliness of my attachment to his person, and that his own regard for me would always be proportionate.

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CHAPTER VII.

A GOOD USE MADE OF THE FIFTEEN HUNDRED DUCATS. A FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE TRADE OF OFFICE, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROFIT ACCRUING THEREFROM.

THE king, as if on purpose to play into the hands of my impatience, returned to Madrid the very next day. I flew like a harpy to the royal treasury, where they paid me down upon the nail the sum drawn for in my order. Ambition and vanity now obtained complete empire over my soul. My paltry lodging was fit only for secretaries of an inferior cast, unpractised in the mysterious language of birds; for which reason, my grand suit of apartments fortunately being vacant, I engaged them for the second time. My next business was to send for an eminent tailor, who arrayed the pretty persons of all the fine gentlemen in town. He took my measure, and then introduced me to a draper, who sold me five ells of cloth, the exact quantity, as he said, to make a suit for a man of my size. Five ells for a light Spanish dress! Whither did this draper and tailor expect to go? . . . But we must not be uncharitable. Tailors who have a reputation to support require more materials for the exercise of their genius, than the vulgar snippers of the shopboard. I then bought some linen, of which I was very bare, an assortment of silk stockings, and a laced hat.

With such an equipage, there was no doing without a footman; so that I desired Vincent Ferrero,

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my landlord, to look out for one. Most of the foreigners who were recommended to his lodgings, on their arrival at Madrid, were wont to hire Spanish servants; and this was the means of turning his house into a register office. The first who offered was a lad of so mortified and devotional an aspect, that I would have nothing to say to him; he put me in mind of Ambrose de Lamela. I am quite out of conceit, said I to Ferrero, with these pious coat-brushers; I have been taken in by them already.

I had scarcely turned virtue in a livery out of doors, when another came up stairs. This seemed to be a good sprightly fellow, with as little mock modesty as if he had been bred at court, and a certain something about him which indicated that he did not carry principle to any dangerous excess. He was just to my mind. His answers to my questions were pat and to the purpose: he evinced a talent for intrigue beyond my most sanguine hopes. This was exactly the subject for my purpose; so I fixed him at once. Neither had I any reason to repent of my bargain; for it was very soon evident that farther off I must have fared worse. As the duke had allowed me to solicit on behalf of my friends, and it was my design to push that permission to the utmost, a stanch hound was necessary to put up the game; or, in phrase familiar to dull capacities, an active chap, with a turn for routing out and bringing to my market all palm-tickling petitioners for the loaves and fishes of the prime minister. This was just where Scipio shone most; for my servant's name was

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Scipio. He had lived last with Donna Anna de Guevara, the Prince of Spain's nurse, where he had ample scope for the exercise of that accomplishment.

As soon as he became acquainted with my credit at court, and the use to which I meant to put it, he took the field like his great ancestors, and began the campaign without the loss of a day. Master, said he, a young gentleman of Grenada is just come to Madrid; his name is Don Roger de Rada. He has been engaged in an affair of honor which compels him to throw himself on the Duke of Lerma's protection, and he is well disposed to come down handsomely for any grace and favor he may obtain. I have talked with him on the subject. He had a mind to have made friends with Don Rodrigo de Calderona, whose influence had been represented to him in magnificent terms; but I dissuaded him, by pointing out that secretary's method of selling his good offices for more than their weight in gold; whereas, on the contrary, you would be satisfied with any decent expression of gratitude for yours, and would even do the business for the mere pleasure of doing it, if you were in circumstances to follow the bent of your own generous and disinterested temper. In short, I talked to him in such a strain, that you will see the gentleman early to-morrow morning. How is all this, Master Scipio? said I. You must have transacted a great deal of business in a short time. You are no novice in back-stairs influence. It is very strange that you have not feathered your own nest. That ought not to sur-

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prise you at all, answered he. I love to make money circulate, not to hoard it up.

Don Roger de Rada came according to his appointment. I received him with a mixture of courtly plausibility and ministerial pride. My worthy sir, said I, before I engage in your interests, I wish to know the nature of the affair which brings you to court; because it may be such as to preclude me from speaking to the minister in your favor. Give me therefore, if you please, the particulars faithfully, and rest assured that I shall enter warmly into your interests, if they are proper to be espoused by a man who moves in my sphere. My young client promised to be sincere in his representation, and began his narrative in the following words.

END OF VOL. II.

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